

(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 which—with—not which. That's a perfect way to start this podcast actually, and you'll see why in a minute. I am at the end of a pregnancy. And this could be the last podcast I record pregnant only because I'm also super busy, which I'm going to talk about. So not that birth is imminent but just the way time moves and the amount of projects to get done this may be it. So I'm laughing because I started the podcast stumbling over my words which illustrates what this podcast is about so perfectly that I could not have planned it better. This is one of the few podcasts where I'm just sitting here in my office on my comfy couch. And I'm just going to blab, and I suppose if it really gets ridiculous maybe it won't be a published podcast. But if you're hearing this, it's just me sitting here on a rainy day at the end of a pregnancy feeling everything and just laughing, I guess, at myself too with how interesting this phase is.

And it's bringing back memories actually of recording the very first podcast of this pregnancy when I was about four weeks and pretty sure I was pregnant but not 100%. And I sat probably in the same exact spot and kind of had this same feeling of being ungrounded in a way, or maybe it's just being grounded somewhere else. But even more so now. But the similarity is not lost on me. I think there are so many similarities with the end of pregnancy to the beginning. There's so many ways those two phases are the same. But I don't think I'm really going to talk about that. It was just something that struck me here as I'm sitting and babbling.

What really is on my mind to share today is just kind of boxing up this feeling and these sensations of being between worlds because I'm fascinated by this stage of pregnancy. I'm absolutely fascinated by it. And in a way, I wish it could go on longer because I feel like even though I've been pregnant so many times, gratefully, and reached this stage of pregnancy, gratefully, there's still so much I wish I could extract. Like just squeezing out all the goodness and all the insight and all the beauty and all the humor and even all the more serious stuff that comes along with being at the end of a pregnancy. Maybe you're not as fascinated as me, and this won't make sense. But I have a feeling a lot of you are. And if you're at the end of a pregnancy and you haven't really thought about these things, which is totally fine and normal—part of the theme is actually not thinking then maybe you'll just feel some resonance with what I'm saying.

I think the way I'm feeling certainly isn't unique to me and has been pretty much the same with all my pregnancies that get to this point. And, again, I'm just fascinated by it.

I don't even know what I'll talk about other than that. And my fascination is just enough to have me sitting here feeling this place that is so interesting. There's so much work, right? That goes into being pregnant and keeping everything going for lack of a better description. So just eating and feeling the baby and getting used to not sleeping. All of these things become our new normal. And in this phase right before birth, I feel like I'm literally hovering above the ground with all of these ways of being that I know are soon to be different. And I'll soon have my feet back on the ground in a different way and maybe not for awhile actually.

But this idea of being suspended in time and sensations that have become so real and so expected and almost common at this point, right? Gratefully. A baby that's moving all the time and feeling those sensations inside my own body and feeling the different ways he moves and times of day that he moves and checking up on that mentally and emotionally and, again, just having that be the normal but being aware that there's just different things to come. It's just this void but not in a bad way. I think—I don't know. Maybe void implies that there's a lot of emptiness somehow, and I don't feel that way. But I mean there's a little bit of everything honestly in all the stages of pregnancy. But this intensified walking between worlds. I think that is a really beautiful way of looking at the labor process. And I certainly feel that way about labor.

But sitting here in this space, I realize so intensely that this between worldsness start way before labor and, in fact, is a good percentage of the pregnancy experience for so many of us. And I don't know why more percentage than others for some people. Some pregnancies—or maybe it's just the timing or the number baby. I don't know. Bring out more of this feeling of having a whole entire pregnancy be kind of caught between worlds, which I felt a little bit at times throughout this one although mostly grounded and able to be present in this world. In this time increasingly as we get towards this labor process which is bringing the baby here on this plane obviously, things get more atmospheric. They get less tangible. And literally, you can find yourself sitting on a couch like this floating somewhere. Where is it? It's not where you were a couple months ago with maybe the plans in your head or the checklist.

And you're not on the other side. The baby is not here. You are not resting comfortably in that space of triumph hopefully and peace, but you are suspended just in between knowing what's happening but not able to maybe intellectualize it as much which is greatly my problem lately. I can feel things more. But even getting the words out even in a podcast like this is hard. It's like I find myself kind of grasping and struggling to find the right word for these feelings that are so three dimensional or maybe four dimensional. Whatever. Five dimensional. They're so complex, and I really do believe that they are not just our own feelings but just this compilation of our lineage of our ancestry, of our grandmothers' grandmothers' grandmother who birthed and what her feelings and experiences were. I do feel that even though I couldn't name them. Again,

or write the story. I know that that is part of this experience is this channeling, for lack of a better word, of experience.

And so I sit with that. And that feels really right and really deep and really emotional to know that we're not alone in this experience or any other really. But there's something so raw about approaching birth. And something so common really. We've all had ancestors that have birthed. So we can easily feel that and identify, I think. But this space gives us the opportunity to do that and removes the veil between the real world, as we call it, and the spirit world. And the spirit world, of course, is where the ancestors are, and I would probably believe some layers or levels of our own spirit babies even the ones in utero. They're not fully embodied yet. And depending on your own experience in pregnancy and soul that you're carrying, I believe there's varying degrees of embodiedness in utero. But certainly I don't think they're completely there. They're not integrated yet, and they won't be until they're on this side and beyond.

So it's this place where I can feel that the ancestral line is also sitting comfortably with this new soul in all the ways and maybe preparing him or her, I suppose, for the journey that's to come. And so in this beautiful way, it feels like we're so united. All of us. Our ancestry, our lineage. And just women in general that we all get this time, again gratefully if we're pregnant, and we have healthy pregnancies and all of that. We have this time before birth that is truly just magic. I don't know what other words I could possibly use other than what I've shared. Being suspended and being just absolutely in bliss in kind of the best use of the word. So not in an everything has to be happy. But a feeling of connection that is deep and knowing, and it really—I have to access my rational brain for a little bit, I guess. I can't help it in some moments which is totally fine.

I can't believe that our culture has gotten this far from normal birth as we have. And it's moments like these I realize how simple it is. And yet, how complex it is that when women are in this medicalized system that's constantly engaging their intellect, there's no knowledge. There's no room for this space. And women at this time in pregnancy in your average situation are being bullied perhaps, right? What about this test? What about that test? You need the Group B Strep test at this point in your pregnancy. When you get to 40 weeks, this will happen. We'll need to start nonstress tests. God forbid you go beyond 41 weeks. Then you have all that to deal with. So it's just so striking with the way I'm feeling how awful, how counterintuitive, how dangerous it is to not allow this space in women and in ourselves really. So maybe we don't know any better. I certainly didn't for my first pregnancy at least.

And so we don't know. We allow ourselves to be taken out of this bliss of this other worldliness that truly is our preparation for birth and mothering. This is truly it. I can say that, and I mean it. And I can feel deeply that this is true after all of the births that I've personally had. That there is no separation between pregnancy, labor, birth, and

mothering. It is a continuum. And so, this point is so clearly to me the beginning of the journey. And maybe it's not even the beginning, right? Maybe it actually started X number of weeks ago, right? At a certain point with a certain thought. But this is a very obvious point of entry, I think, for me right now. That I can so clearly see labor and birth flowing out of this space. There is no difference. It is not something separate that happens at this magical hour on this magical day even though our brains like to tell us that it is, right? Labor starting. The journey that I am on with this baby to bring him here has already started whether it's three weeks or four weeks before me. This piece had begun.

And, again, this place of being not quite here and there, having access to our ancestors, all the things that I've shared are true for me I do think can be true in varying ways and forms for everyone. So what are we doing to women to take them out of this space? How often are we not respecting where they're at and not honoring that? And even as a midwife, I'm certainly a human. I'm not perfect. It has given me more compassion that I hope I can really bottle up better maybe than I have in the past for this stage because I've known this stage exists. I remember relishing it with my second baby. My first baby was an induction, so I didn't have that opportunity or didn't know about it. And with my second, I remember the first time of being able to sit in this glorious space of baby could come any time. And where am I? And who am I? And all of these great questions.

So I've experienced it many times, and I would like to have even more compassion for women I serve in remembering this space. It's the most crazy thing. This space and even just pregnancy in general. Something like baby movement, right? You think you'll remember exactly how it feels. Or a contraction. You think you'll know. You will remember. But there is something that leaves our brain when the experience is behind us. And so perhaps this compassion is one of those things that I want to know deeper, so that I can more truly serve women at this stage. And so by that, I mean even though I know it exists I can easily find myself doing the status quo sort of thing with women. At least occasionally. And by that, kind of taking them out of this dreamy state. And instead of asking about their dreams or questions like that, we engage in other conversations that are more analytical or intellectual. Or she needs to make a choice about A, B, or C or should make a choice about A, B, or C.

And I feel like I'm fairly compassionate. And I understand. But I still think I could do better. Being in this space now that I'm in, if I had anyone that I was working with—which, of course, there is no one helping me here other than Margo, who will be attending my birth, I don't have anyone checking in with me for better or for worse. And so, I realize out intolerant I would be in this moment of anyone asking anything that took me out of my space. The brain is not functioning in the same way that it was earlier in pregnancy or will in the postpartum. It's actually 100% true, to my knowledge that the brain shrinks at the end of pregnancy. And I recently learned that, and I found it just so

fitting. And I couldn't even tell you the reasons why because my brain is not working in that manner. But essentially, it's so, I think, that we can be in more this primitive, animalistic, raw state and not bother ourselves with time, numbers, details, choices. Making a choice right now is extremely hard. But just acknowledging that that's the space and it's okay has been hugely relieving.

So my husband asked me the other day about something. Probably it wasn't even a big choice. Maybe it was what to have for dinner. And I said to him, "You know, I just can't. Just go ahead and choose these things right now because I can't." And I don't really care. So there. Another example would be the real lack of linear thinking. I know there are things I have to get done, and I will. And I can focus on them. But details like time and numbers are totally elusive. I've had a couple of appointments last week that I just had at the wrong time in my brain despite conversations, despite having it written down correctly on a calendar. It's absolutely wild especially for someone that's fairly organized. I'm not a real spacey person in real life. So to have this experience of feeling that way and acknowledging it and accepting it, I think is humbling, and I don't know how many pregnancies it would take before perhaps you could just expect that more. I find it's always a little surprising because there are moments even in this state that you do integrate back in, right? To the real world.

Maybe that's your child asking for something, or you're having to read a book. There's so many examples where we do come in and out. I don't feel that I completely can float away every minute of every day. But a huge part of time is spent that way especially in sleep, especially in dreams. I've felt that although my sleep is really not good it's preparatory in the way it's kind of chopped up. So an hour and a half to two hours at most. Get up. Pee. Maybe eat, drink. Whatever. Go back to bed and dream something that I can't even recall. But that I feel it's a journey already with this baby which I haven't necessarily felt or noted with my others. Just that we have this kind of ride all through dream time together where we're getting—we're getting acquainted better. And we're getting to know each other, and on some level, we're making our plan for how this is all going to go in a couple of weeks. And that's something really subtle that's cool and that I hadn't noticed until now. And that makes the lack of sleep more tolerable because it's kind of this crazy, magical time of night.

Yeah. I don't think I've noticed that before. So that will certainly change as it should when a baby is earth side. And everything is just different. This isn't a podcast about that part yet although I'm sure I will share more as I do every time because that's a whole different journey. That's a whole different out of body trying to find your center, trying to find your feet. That's kind of like the other side of the coin from this one. It's like this is the up the mountain. And the mountaintop is birth. And then postpartum, to me, feels like coming down the other side of the mountain. So all the adaptations that go with that—a lot of the opposite adaptations, but the similarity I guess is still kind of

being in the spirit world, having access to that, not really have your feet on the ground, and just having to live it because that's the space we're being asked to be in to be in this journey.

So that's something I'd like to leave people with if anything beyond my babbling. If this is new to you or if some of these thoughts and feelings resonate with you, then embrace it. And don't apologize. And there is no need for any of us who are close to birth to be anything different or anything more than we are being. Everything goes in my opinion. Being in this space is probably the most important thing despite getting food in your children's mouths or whatever it is that really has to get done in your day-to-day life to function. Beyond that, there shouldn't really be anything or isn't anything that is more important than engaging in this part of the journey because it's so crucial for what comes next. Again, it's not separate. It's not unrelated. Where we are now definitely carries us through. I'd like to think kind of like a river. Like water from one point on the banks to another. And that's this late pregnancy to birth.

So I think that's all I have to blab about. Like I said, just off the top of my head and with what I'm feeling and should I ever go back and listen to myself speak which I kind of can't imagine doing. But who knows? Maybe one day my little baby here will listen to a podcast like this that I've made about him and my experience, and that feels pretty special too. So blessings to all on their continued pregnancy journey, if that's where you're at. I might get to say hello again about another topic here at the end. But if not, I hope to meet and greet you with love and health and wellness on the other side of all this. Have a great day. Thanks for listening.

(closing music)