

(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 out for a beautiful walk midafternoon in beautiful Sedona, Arizona where it shall soon become too hot for afternoon walks. So multitasking here. I have an eight week old, Cove River, at home taking a little nap, and so there's nothing like killing two birds with one stone which is recording this podcast as I walk my dog. One of our dogs. And this one is a puppy. Her name is Henna. And she's a beautiful cattle dog, who is a handful. If you know anything about cattle dogs, you'll know what I mean. So she's out for her third walk of the day, and she took a little doggy vacation leading up to Cove's birth because she required more than we could handle. But she's back, and I actually really love this dog. So Henna is along for the podcast. Hopefully, she behaves herself, but there are noises of outside as you can probably hear already. Cars and there's a plane overhead at the moment, so hopefully Henna doesn't add to the mix with any bad canine behavior. But we shall see since I'm not a fan of editing these podcasts unless something goes horribly wrong.

So eight weeks post birth, and I have been meaning to record this podcast for the last three weeks which goes to show you, if you don't know already, how having a newborn in the house is. Weeks just fly by, and she's obviously my priority. So most days are still spent nursing and getting out for sure. We've even attended a couple of births, so that's exciting. But by close to the end of the day, it's just being home and sitting and nursing her. She's not the world's best sleeper during the day. Really good at night. So anyway, that's not the topic of this podcast. The topic does have to do with Miss Cove, however, and that topic is just pain in birth. Maybe I'll think of something better to call it by the time we release this podcast.

But that was my intention when I was thinking a couple weeks ago and making some notes. And really it's been on my mind since before her birth. So if you haven't read Cove's birth story and/or watched her birth video, you can totally do that at indiebirth.org/fullbirthofcoveriver. All one word there after the slash. I honestly don't remember if her birth story is on that page. That's the video page. But you'll find it through Google should you want to read it. And I'm going to kind of go off, digress, from what was written there for her birth story. So perhaps you do want to read it to get a little review.

I love writing birth stories. And hers was really simple. And right after she was born, like the birth nerd that I am, I remember just thinking that I didn't know if this would

make a great story. I mean it did matter. It was a great birth. But as far as the written word, I remember thinking, "Man, there's not much to say." Like I had some contractions, and she came out. That was pretty much it. But of course, with more introspection and reading through the many journals I keep during pregnancy, it was revealed to me that there really is and was a bigger message for myself and, perhaps, to share with the world about the way her birth went and how I interpreted the sensations of her birth both physically and emotionally and spiritually.

So before I really get into talking about these sensations and the way her birth felt, the disclaimer. There's always a disclaimer, right? Birth can look lots of ways. And birth can feel lots of ways, and that's the magnificence and the mystery—oh, Henna—of this experience, I think, is that we can watch birth from the outside and we can have our own descriptive words, but we never know what the woman was really feeling inside unless she shares. And we might be wrong with our labeling or our adjectives, right? This funny story comes to mind from years and years ago, so nobody would be able to identify herself through this story. But anyway, I was a student, and it was a long time ago. And there was a client we had that we were helping who was having her second baby. And as a good student, I got to spend her labor with her while the midwife hadn't shown up yet.

And that was really cool. This woman and I were friends and had a nice connection. And her labor, from my point of view—only my point of view—was a little rough. Like not abnormally rough or painful, but sort of typically painful in the way I would have described it, right? But I wasn't her. So I didn't think anything of it. It seemed like just a normal labor to me. There was lots of yelling and normal really in so many ways. And after the birth, actually not far after the birth at all—so it wasn't as if that post birth haze had set in that sometimes—well, not sometimes—we all experience that to a degree. That's how we go on to have more children because we don't remember the sensations that well. I don't think.

Anyway, this woman in discussing her own birth really just hours after she had given birth described her birth as painless. And I thought that was so interesting because that was not all how it looked. That was not all how it sounded. But I've learned over the years that it doesn't matter really. Women will describe their experiences the way they do, and there's all respect for all the ways that that goes. So vice versa, right? We can watch a woman birth, and it can look just so easy and seamless. And I've seen so many that way too, and that woman experienced real pain or trauma. That's kind of the worst end of that whole spectrum is people can have traumatic births that don't look that way to us.

So the whole point that I'm trying to make with this long disclaimer is that I'm going to share my experience and what my labeling words were for myself and my adjectives.

And it has no reflection on anyone else's birth. It has no reflection on my past births. I could go into detail with all eight of my other lives births and tell you how they felt, but they were all wonderful. They really were. All of my births, I have been so blessed, have been great. So it doesn't look one way. And just because I say that my birth felt this way, it doesn't mean that you're bad if yours didn't. I don't even know where that idea comes from, but I always have to say it because I'm enough in the world to know that that's a thing. In fact, just today I posted this gorgeous birth photo of a woman I had just attended a couple days ago who also described her birth as painless. And in the text of the photo on Instagram, I said something, "Birth can be joyful and experienced without pain." And somewhere on social media—the devil that it is, right? Somebody made a comment like, "Birth can be painful and joyful." Kind of disagreeing or maybe being that devil's advocate.

But that's needed. Being a devil's advocate is not needed, I don't think, in this discussion because we're all created equal really. If you want to say that birth is painful and joyful, go for it. By saying it's painless and joyful for some doesn't negate anybody else's experience. So anyway, that's probably a different podcast because that's something I don't understand about the world. And I think, as women, we're regularly shooting each other down with that kind of stuff. Just respect what someone is sharing. It doesn't mean anything about you because I don't know you, and you don't know me. So on that note, let me share more about Cove's birth and yeah. And how I experienced that. So I'm not going to go through all of my eight live births. They've all been recorded somewhere. In fact, I think it's the circle of birth podcast that I was on years ago where she literally had me tell all my stories, and it took two podcasts. So I won't do that there.

But I want to reiterate that all of my births have been magnificent in their own ways. They've all taught me a lot. Some have been longer. Some have been shorter. Some I would say were painful. Some I would say there were different words that I would have used. But it had never felt easy for me. So take that for what it is. I'm just being honest. And I think there's lots of reasons for that that I want to share a little bit about. I think a lot of it has to do with attending births and seeing other women's experiences and/or studying and having textbook knowledge. That's not always the best thing. So if you had asked me before Cove's birth, I would have said, "I love birth. I love doing it. I love witnessing it obviously." But birth is hard work. Birth is not easy. That was my experience. I knew I was strong, and I was always so proud of myself honestly as I am so proud of all the women I see no matter how their birth turns out for doing this thing. Doing it. Birth is hard.

I also had this really strong belief that birth is an initiation. And I don't disagree with that now that I've experienced Cove's birth. But I think I had a very narrow-minded view of initiation honestly. And, again, it kind of came back to that idea of it being hard. It

being—yeah. I don't have another word. Being painful and being hard. So even the expressions that I've used, and many people use, like walking across the coals. I think that's actually a beautiful, poetic way of describing some labors. But I think it's also interesting how our words can confine us. And so, for me, describing birth that way or anticipating it in that way was not helpful, right? So I think it's one thing to reflect on your past experiences and say something like that. It was like walking across the coals. It felt hard. It was hard work.

But to go into an experience even when you're having your ninth baby and expect that, you'll be walking across coals, as I found, isn't so helpful because you totally will manifest that. So I'm taking a long time to say the same thing, which is for myself I had never imagined or manifested the idea that birth can be easy and birth can be simple. And it's not because I didn't believe it. I have seen women, again, from my point of view have births that looked just like wow. And I would say to myself, "Man, I want a birth like that. Why don't I have births like that?" So I believed it could happen, but it just felt like that's not my karma. That's not my path to experience birth that way. But I didn't realize I was getting in my own way by believing that or by saying that out loud or even in my head. So I think there's lots of cultural influences here, and maybe you'll agree, right? On any given day.

And it's, again, not to invalidate people's stories. So if a woman tells you her birth story and she tells you it was hard, then it was hard, right, for her? And that's great. It doesn't mean anything about anything else. I can think of an influence—and, again, this is meant in the best possible light. But before my daughter Deva's birth, which you can also watch at thebirthmovie.com—her birth was beautiful. And it wasn't painful, but there was still a part that felt hard. And right before Deva was born, we had the Indie Birth midwifery conference here in Sedona. And she was born literally two days after the conference, which I did not expect. And anyway, at that conference, we premiered the trailer for my friend Emily's movie called *Of Woman Born*. It wasn't called that at the time, but that's what it's called now. And it's an awesome movie. It's beautiful and compelling and all of the things that a birth movie should be. And it's just of her labor.

But I was so impressionable being 48 hours, unbeknownst to me, from birthing myself, and I just strongly remember watching this beautiful trailer and crying. It was so powerful. But her saying in the narrative—and I think this is still in the actual film something like, "Let it be hard." And that's—it's so beautiful. And that was her experience. That birth was one of her more difficult ones for reasons that one of us could go into at some point or maybe a conversation together. So legitimately felt that way to her and was. But that was kind of the impression I was left with before Deva's birth. And I think that influenced her. So whether it's a story we read or a birth video we watch or a person we run into at the grocery store who is sharing their birth story, sometimes the words people use and their impression of their experience however valid

gets imprinted on us. And so that's kind of the chain reaction in our culture with birth. And normally, it's not that positive as we know how many people have encountered a seriously awful or negative story at the grocery store. How many people want to tell you about their awful, horrible births or their traumatic births or their surgical births, whatever. So that's how that imprinting can be passed on very innocently. However, we have the ability and the power and now I realize this so strongly to pass on another kind of imprinting. And that is my hope with sharing more about this experience that I had is that people listening will have this change of heart or in their spirit or in their mind or whatever it is where you say, "Oh, I didn't think it to be that way. I'm changing what I think about birth." And it's that easy. It's that easy. It's as easy as saying that you believe something different.

So yeah. More cultural stuff—hey, Henna. Please don't be bad. Obviously, there's tons more cultural influence that I'm sure many of us could talk collectively about with hospital birth, with most people having medicalized birth, and even doulas as much as I love doulas. That there's this piece in place for many women to rescue them from the process or to help them in a way that I honestly don't believe we can be helpful. And that's been my belief as a midwife all of the time. Whether I thought birth was hard or simple didn't matter. I've always believed that we are walking that road alone, and it doesn't mean we can't have great support in the form of a partner or friends or a midwife. But in the end, it is our path to walk whether it is simple or hard. So not the most popular belief.

So another belief that I was really harboring was the, "This is how I do it thing." I've birthed, like I said, eight children, and I'm not going to go through all the birth stories like I said. But in essence, I kind of had a pattern. My body had what I would have said was the way of doing it. And to be brief, my last couple of births really did follow the same pattern, and that was I'd kind of wake up in the morning having contractions early laborish stuff and enjoy a day with my family. Maybe I'd even go out or we'd have a picnic but contracting all the way the whole day on and off. Not intense or anything. And then around dinnerish time, it becoming hard and what I would have said was painful. And then a baby coming out around 9:00 or 10:00. So if you had asked me before Cove, I would have just assumed that's the way I would do it again. And I'm just saying the same thing, which is those beliefs aren't really that helpful. And I would catch myself actually saying this out loud. So maybe if you're about to birth or you're pregnant or considering it, it's not too early to think what do I tell myself about how this should go or has gone.

And obviously, I've had great experiences. So that was part of the problem was me saying to myself—this isn't a bad thing. I'm not telling myself anything really awful, but I was solidifying, again, this belief that birth was long for me, and that the intense part was painful even though that part may have been short. So that was really interesting

to consider in my pregnancy with Cove. It was the first time I thought to myself, "Why wouldn't I be able to change that? That's just a mold that I've set. And this baby can be different, if I want it to be. If I don't want it to, then that's fine. Then I'll just keep believing that this is the way I do it, and I'll probably do it exactly like that. And that'll be that." And you know what? If I had done that, still would have been a great birth I'm sure. But I feel like my life has changed so immensely with the fact that I didn't choose that, and that I feel like I chose something different and experienced something different. And, again, this is probably another podcast, but it's put me in a place that I've wanted to be for awhile which is I am really feeling finished with this birth and childbearing thing personally. Again, no one needs to hold me to that, but I've never felt this complete. And I think it's because her birth was just so divinely perfect. It was just beyond words perfect. It was a billion times more perfect than I ever could have imagined for myself.

So with that, I feel like my childbearing years might have come to a close. And that closure feels really great at the moment. So we'll see where that goes. Another thing—another belief that I really felt confident about, right? Confidence is great. And I was so confident that this is the way my body does it. And there was such a positive part to that, right? Like this is the way my body does it. I can have babies. This is how it happens kind of predictable. Like there is comfort in that. So I had the best of intentions for myself. But another part of that equation was, "Oh, I'm really loud in birth." And that began with my second birth. My first was a hospital birth, so I kind of wasn't allowed to be loud for lack of a better way of describing it. My second was our first home birth. And ever since his birth, I just would have labeled myself as such. "Oh, I'm really loud. I need to be loud." And not screaming at the top of my lungs but vocalizing and there's nothing wrong with that, by the way. It's beautiful.

But it came to be this caricature of myself. That's an expression one of my college professors used in the music world, and I liked it then. And I like it now because we can kind of overdo ourselves, if you know what I mean. And that was one way. I was really putting myself in a box. This is the way I do it. This is the way I sound. This is what it feels like. And so I wanted to shatter that box with Cove's birth. And I'll talk more about how I think that happened, but it was just first in questioning these things. So, again, there's nothing wrong with anything I have described. There's nothing wrong with the way anyone births. And so it wasn't from that perspective. It was from the perspective of how powerful are my intentions. How powerful is my mind? Do we create what we set out to create? Or are we just running on this predetermined path that we have no control over? Those are existential questions, and I don't have the answers to that in the larger view of life.

Hold on a second. Very loud car and microphone drop. Anyway, but that was another box. Another box—well, so we have a bunch, right? I've already gone through a few.

Being loud and having very vocal labors was another. Another box was I have to work hard to push a baby out. And I feel like I had broken that box open with Deva's birth a little bit. If you watch her birth, you'll see I kind of just breathe her down. And so that was totally new, so I had already had a peek at, "Hmm, maybe I don't do it that way. Maybe I can try it this way." And as I'll say probably a couple more times, I'm just so blessed to have witnessed the births that I have because the women have taught me this. It's not like it came from a book. Really the ability to witness powerful women with births that look all kinds of ways and are described all kinds of ways I credit so much of that experience with being privileged enough to consider this for myself. Especially some births in the last year or two have really changed me and really cracked me open to this new vision of birth that I wanted for myself.

So pushing and taking awhile to do that was a box I was in. But, again, the box I felt like I put myself in for many of my births really I don't think is a box that I've held other women to. At least, I would be horrified if it felt that way to anybody. As a midwife, I think we get really good at leaving behind our own personal experience for the most part, and we just witness. So I've never felt that way about anyone else's process like, "Oh, they're loud. Or oh they're really taking awhile to push this baby out." Some of those things are clinical observations. But in other words, it's funny how you can have lots of judgment for yourself and not necessarily put it on other people but be the hardest on yourself.

Let's see. Yeah. And I guess a respect for however it needs to go for another woman. So we know as midwives and birth workers or maybe you've had many babies that there are many things that can change a labor, right? Sometimes it's just where someone is having a baby or who they have present or their own emotional path or spiritual path and the path of this baby. So in the end, I still believe that. If my birth felt perfect for me, it was because my baby wanted it that way. I don't think we are fully in control when we're birthing. We have another person that has a soul path, so that's the wind up with births all the time. And sometimes they don't turn out the way we want at all. So more about pain and this idea of orgasmic birth, I don't think that's a new idea to anyone. There is a movie. I think there is a book. And I did kind of dig deeper into that. And I'll just be totally honest. Has anyone just laughed at the idea of an orgasmic birth? Like I totally have. And, again, not in someone saying that they had one. But more this perspective of the movie or a book saying that that's a goal.

I totally have been cynical and chuckled at that notion. But it was a box. It was a box I had put myself in. And orgasmic. I think the only thing that I still would say about that is that we don't have to choose that word. We can choose any word that means we're free. We're free to be joyful. We're free to feel it as a sexual adventure, if we want. But that isn't the only way. That's as much a confining factor as anything else. But yet, I get that that concept is really—let's see. What's the word? Really radical. And that's great.

So for me, it was taking the orgasmic birth stuff and kind of reframing it to be what I needed it to be which wasn't really orgasmic but joyful and pleasurable. So pleasure is not just sexual, right? Sure. Sexual pleasure is one variety of pleasure. But pleasure comes in all forms. And so reflecting on that more in my pregnancy was really helpful. And trying to have more pleasure in my pregnancy even. So it's that good old oxytocin factor. What brings me joy? What brings me pleasure? And why would I save that just for labor, right? Why would we save that just for pregnancy? we should all be trying to incorporate more pleasure. But I would reframe my memory of birth, which yes. Is hazy as I said in my own pregnancy as I prepared.

So I don't know if that makes sense. But as I went through the last half of Cove's pregnancy, I kind of imagined the labor process as pleasurable. I imagine how that would feel and how I would look. And when a tightening would happen, what I could do with my body or what mantra I could repeat to stay with this idea that it's not painful. It's not meant to be painful. And the idea of pain is only going to bring, of course, more restriction, less blood flow, and then you're stuck with pain. So it's really a lose lose scenario. Even if it sort of doesn't work for you in the end, it's definitely something to try. How can I feel pleasure in this sensation? And there's so many things in life like that whether they're physical or emotional. That at first our bodies close up and shrink back, and we've labeled it bad. We've labeled it pain. But if we just change it around, if we just look at that other side of the coin or whatever expression you want to use, our bodies relax. Our bodies loosen up. And that was exactly what I experienced in Cove's labor. I honest to goodness did not experience pain. And I never thought I would say that. It almost makes me feel like I'm being ridiculous. How did that happen?

But a tightening would come, and I would sink into it. And I would say, "This is good. This is pleasurable. That feels great." And if I needed to rationalize it more, which wasn't really a thing in—for me in this birth, it would be, "That's my baby. That's my body opening. That's my baby coming through." There is nothing to fear in a normal scenario, right? By the same token, then we trust our bodies to let us know if there is something wrong or if a sensation needs to be interpreted with a different kind of attitude. But it was just so amazing and really revolutionary for me to have each tightening come and not shrink back. In fact, to go into it and to say my body, "Is that it? Is that all you got," kind of thing. And I was telling my sister this story this morning. But I had a good friend, who had a baby—I think he's ten now. And they don't live even in the country anymore, so I haven't seen her in a long time. But when she had this baby ten years ago, it was her second. And her first had been a cesarean. I think it was a transferred home birth. I was not in midwifery at that point or maybe just starting.

So with the second birth, she was obviously a VBAC. And no one would help her here because that wasn't allowed in Arizona at the time. And so I was just kind of helping her as a friend. And so she called me one night. She was thinking she was in labor. And

I'll never forget as these stories go. I stopped for gas. She was only about 15 minutes away. But I stopped for gas because I really needed gas. And I got there, and her husband ran out. And he said, "The baby is here." So lesson learned, don't stop for gas. But yet, it was perfect. I wasn't supposed to be there. And I'll never forget. She was sitting in this dry bathtub. She hadn't even had time to put the water on. It was her—her labor must have been just—pretty fast. And she told me that it was not hard. And that it was intense, but she kind of said what I just said before I started this story which was she said that to her body. Is that all you got? Is that it? Don't—aren't you going to challenge me more? Up against it. Kind of into it. Not shrinking back saying, "Oh god. What's next? This is awful. This is painful." No. Is that it? I can do this.

Anyway, so I credit her with that idea and that—yeah. That idea that really has stayed in my consciousness for ten years. Ten years before I could utilize it fully, but that was my feeling as I was going through Cove's labor was really? Is this it? Okay. Go. Do it. Give me it. Give me more. I can take it. So that was a very different way of handling the sensation, and it worked for me. So Hypnobirthing, Hypnobabies, right? There's all kinds of techniques out there. And if you have one that makes you feel this way and et cetera, go for it. It hadn't ever been something that had worked for me. And in hindsight having taken those classes, maybe I just wasn't ready. Maybe I was do rooted in my beliefs that birth is hard, that I do it this way that I wasn't really open to any of it until now for whatever spiritual reasons really.

So other women that have experienced—yes—have influenced me are numerous as I've said. And as a student, I saw many women, again, appear as if birth wasn't a big deal. But I guess not knowing what they're experiencing on the inside still gave me that doubt for myself that it would ever be something I could experience. So there was a birth this last year. And this woman was amazing as they all are. And she really started to change my consciousness in a way that was new. So I've done the whole don't use these words sort of things. Like contractions even. And I've always honored everybody's requests for the words that they wanted to use in their births but would kind of always revert back to my more clinical vocabulary when talking with other midwives or writing or whatever it is. And so I feel like there's been a huge shift in that thanks to these women and this one in particular who I'll share a little of her story just with the words and how powerful it is. And with Cove's birth, I do think I called them contractions, and I don't think I probably even wrote that much in her story. I really did experience them just as tightening.

And even labor was a word that I had been reflecting a lot on in my pregnancy with her. And that also came from a woman on the outside saying something along those lines like, "Why do we use that word?" And at first, I was like, "Oh my gosh. Really, people? Can we say nothing anymore? Can we not just call things what they are?" But the more I started to dig in internally I realized that words wasn't feeling helpful for me either

in this reframing that I was slowly maybe subconsciously even doing before her birth. So the birthing process is probably something that's preferable to me, and it doesn't mean I never use the word labor. I mean certainly it's easier just in maybe conversations with other midwives or whatever. But the deeper feeling of that led me to shift, and I wasn't willing to call my experience a labor. If it didn't need to be hard and it didn't need to be painful, then why was it a labor? It was just simply this thing we do to bring a baby here. And that's how I started thinking about it. So I know I'm kind of hitting a lot of different points, but that's how I do it.

So anyway, back to this woman who I had the honor of walking with, she was big on the whole vocabulary thing. And like I said, I was happy to respect that and didn't realize how much that would change me. And then her birth was just as effortless although, truth be told, I wasn't present for it because it happened that fast and/or it was better for her to do it the way she did it. So I don't ever consider it an accident when I don't make the birth. I'm very responsible, and my clients know that. And mostly everyone lives pretty close. So to miss a birth sounds so serious. But these type of women it's perfect when it happens that way. And I would say they want it to happen that way subconsciously or not. So this woman, who kind of passed on this imprint of this painless experience, described it as such obviously once we did get to her house. She looked kind of shocked. and I understand that too now with Cove's birth having happened so quickly. That if I wasn't a midwife and I hadn't seen lots of birthing patterns and all of that, I totally get in a way how someone could have a baby just come out of them suddenly. That all made sense. All the years I've wondered about the I didn't know I was pregnant. Well, I guess that's a different topic. But women that I didn't know I was having a baby. I get it now to a certain degree because if the mental brain really isn't involved and someone doesn't have a lot of clinical knowledge and they don't experience birth as painful I get it.

So this woman was one of those powerful women that passed on this imprint of birth being no big deal, of birth being painless and easy. And, again, it's not that I haven't worked with these kind of women before. It's not that I haven't personally witnessed births where it seems like the baby just fell out as Margo and I like to say. But I just wasn't ready for it until now. So that's the way it goes. You have to be ready for whatever it is. When the time is right, the teacher appears or whatever that expression is. So I fully realize that it just wasn't time, and that the experiences I had were meant to be that way. And they were so valuable.

So in preparation for Cove's birth, all of these things were going through my head. Tons of writing. Tons of journal entries on these topics of just exploring like what if. What if in those moments when I've felt in the past like—and this is how I would describe it. The world shattered open because that's how that part of birth has always felt to me. And I've always been scared of that part. Not scared of death even. Just scared of that

sensation. Kind of before the baby comes down and out. At least when you've had a lot of babies before. But even that fear thing, I really started questioning my fears. I'm obviously afraid of something. If birth is painful, there is some sort of fear there. And, again, I'm not saying that's true for everybody. But I felt like for me, it was. There was something I wasn't wanting to open up to. And why? And again, this is just me. There's lots of reasons why somebody could have those thoughts or truly have fears. But I didn't know what mine was. And so I went through it emotionally and even mentally. And as I just shared, it really wasn't a fear of death at least that I could isolate. I knew I wouldn't die in birth and especially in those moments of the earth shattering open or whatever I would have said. So what was I afraid of?

And I never really got this concrete fear. What I received in answer was just I was shrinking. I was shrinking back from the bigness that is a person coming through you, so I don't think it needs to be painful. I don't think it needs to be hard. But it's still a thing, right? It's still an event, or at least that was the belief that I still hold. So maybe that's a belief shattering for another birth. No. Not me. Or another day. Anyway, so those are some things I was thinking that I definitely had a fear about those moments, those concrete moments. The opening of my body I wasn't scared of. The crowning of a baby, I love that part. There was just this part of birth that felt like ugh. I can't do it. And that's where I lose it. That's where I scream. That's where you crack open, and you become this new person. And I think there is still, again, so much beauty in those poetic descriptions and that experience. But I just wanted a different one this time. I just wanted to feel like it doesn't need to be that crazy. It doesn't need to shatter me in that same way if I don't want it to. Of course, I'm changed. Obviously, I'm changed, and it's really ironic, I think, that the biggest shift in my perception has come with a less intense physical experience.

So for me, that was proof here on the other side that yeah. We don't need to shatter ourselves in birth. I mean sometimes we do. And sometimes we will whether we want to or not. But that was just the change of heart that I didn't need to shatter in the way that I had in the past. And here I am. Changed more than ever. So how cool is that to just be 40 plus years of age and to have something completely new come into your awareness that you kind of didn't expect?

So I asked for what I wanted with her birth. And, of course, that's a tough one. and when I'm helping people prepare, I'm not saying they have to do that, or you have to do that. For some people, it's appropriate in all the ways for them to leave room. Leave room for what if. Leave room for God controls this. And I don't not believe those things. I'm just saying with this birth, I said, "Nope. This is the way I'm going to experience it." I don't control every aspect I realize, but I control more than I think. And that was what was huge. So do we give up control completely? Or do we hold on and we are so inflexible? I think there is this middle ground, and I felt like that's what I found this time.

I found this middle ground where I was totally not compromising with how I would experience it. But yet, of course, there was room. Of course, there was this bit of room for my baby and for the universe. But my uncompromising characteristics were it is going to be simple. It is going to be short. And it is going to be pleasurable. And that's exactly what I got. And so it was.

Her labor—her birth experience, correction, was so completely calm. It was so beautiful. Anybody from the outside, as Margo or my husband would share with you, had no idea what was actually happening. So it was like this secret I had because I knew my body was doing this. The contractions were really far apart but super long. Like almost two minutes long. And I could feel everything in this new way without, again, this label of pain or even intensity. I just called it pressure. Through my whole experience, I just said, "That's pressure. Just allow the pressure." And like I said, I'd sink into it. And I'd say to myself, "Is that it? Is that as—is that all you got body?" And just they would come. They would go. And I knew it was happening.

So nobody else did. I mean they knew something was happening. But I'm sure they thought they had all day just like all my labors have been, right? Our support isn't immune from taking on this box that we've put around ourselves. So I'm sure my husband and Margo thought, "Yeah. She'll be at this all day. She'll have a baby tonight." And, of course, it wasn't that way at all. She was born at 10:55 a.m. after—I would probably say only two hours of really anything at all. And that was immensely different. So I was completely calm. I was really just so confident and without fear. I was so present in my body in a new way. And if you watch her birth video, you can see, I think—I mean watching it is always a little weird, I'll admit, especially multiple times. But I'm so present when she's born, and that was a whole different experience from the birth—from her coming out but was similar in that same intention, which is I'm going to be so present. I'm going to be right here. I'm not going to think ahead.

So I didn't feel the phases of her birth experience in the same emotional way either. So I've already shared how physically it kind of didn't register. But clinically, I knew a baby would be coming out soon. But emotionally, I just was really even. I didn't lose it, right? And, again, not that losing it is bad. That's necessary we're taught, and so it is for many women in many births. But this time, I had decided I wouldn't lose it. That that wasn't a thing I needed to do. And so I didn't. I didn't look to anyone else to tell me it would be okay like I have in the past. Again, not that anything is wrong with that. But I just wanted a new experience. Nine times, right? I should have ways that I wanted to be different. That's enough practice. Many women experience this kind of birth their first or second time. And so that's amazing because it took me all of these times.

So yeah. Emotionally, I didn't have a lot of shifts. I didn't lose my mind. I didn't scream. I didn't really make any noise at all. And I knew she was coming out because I could

just feel her in my body completely rotated ready to descend. I could feel her from the outside when I would touch my belly. I knew she was in that position. And I remember the sensations just getting closer together. And I was just breathing more deeply. But still saying to myself, "This is pressure. This is pressure. It's okay. It's okay. And I love you baby." And all of these positive things. And the last mantra I repeated was, "We are blessed." And I just stood in front of my mirror in my bathroom, and I just watched my belly tighten kind of like in this bizarre—like I almost wasn't in my body, but I was sort of thing. And I just watched it happen. And I breathed through, and I kept saying, "We are blessed. We are blessed. We are blessed. Any time, baby. Whatever." And I realize this was it. This was her birth. This was about to happen.

And call me crazy but I texted my sister, who was—who I'm very close to and connected with—she knew that this was happening. And I just said to her, "I think this baby is coming out now, and it's a girl." And she gave her good wishes and love, and I put the phone down. And I took a breath. And I bear down just a tiny bit with the tightening. And that was it. It was like a roller coaster ride. It was a storm. I just went down on the floor like somehow I managed to throw a towel down which sounds ridiculous. And I kind of shut my eyes, and it was like when you're on a roller coaster. And you close your eyes, and you just feel it. And all of a sudden you're at the end. That's exactly the way I would have described it. And it wasn't painful. It was—I don't even know if there is a word in my vocabulary that can describe. It was like other worldly or something. It felt like something just took over, and there was no pain. And there wasn't fear. And yes. There was pressure, but that was my baby coming out. And it all happened in—what felt like a minute.

And I wished Margo had had the camera on in my room for this part. But alas, she did not. But it wasn't more than a contraction. I literally put the phone down and took a breath, and then I was just down on the floor. And I was on this roller coaster. I was just a passenger. And my baby came out. Her head came out, and I remember very strongly talking to myself which I have a habit of doing at my own births. But, again, I didn't scream. There was no noise at all. And right before her head came out, I must have caught a pause enough to talk to myself. And I said something like, "Oh my god. I can't do it." And I caught myself. And I said, "I can do it. This is it. Just breathe." And it was, again, this ride like I was just on this roller coaster. So I had a couple seconds to give myself that pep talk and then boom. I was on the roller coaster again, and her head was just out.

And it was no pushing. It was no effort. It was no—I don't even know if I breathed. It literally just took my breath away. And I have never, in all my births, experienced that. And I wish I could even describe it better even for my own records of maybe listening to this one day because it's something that leaves your visceral memory so quickly. I mean here I am at eight weeks postpartum, and I don't even remember. I can't recall. I

mean my brain has the story to tell you. But my body has forgotten already other than the huge sensations that I've tried to describe. But it was fantastic. It was fantastic. It was so fast and so effortless. And like I said, I was not actively doing anything. I wasn't trying. I wasn't even breathing. It just—she just bulletted out. But yet, it was so graceful.

So if you read the birth story, you'll see—and this is where the birth video begins. Her head is out, and I call for the family to come in. I barely have a voice. I do remember that. It's really hard to yell when a head is sticking out of you. And I was so just caught off guard in a way by this experience. So I yell for them to come. Nobody hears me the first couple times I yell. And then I don't know. The third time or something I hear my son, Rune, say, "Mom is yelling." And they all come in. And her head is still out. And then the video gets put on, and this captures her birth, which I am so grateful for because it seems almost impossible when I retell the story that this birth even would have gotten videotaped which would have been fine too. But is really perfect the way it worked out.

So I don't know what else to share other than it was perfect for me, for this time. And that whatever your birth desire, whatever your wish is, there is such a good possibility that you can create that. And I'm not going to go into all the disclaimers again. But obviously, you have to work through whatever those are for you because disclaimers are cool. And they maybe protect me from sort of unnecessary arguing our conversation, which obviously you can't even do here with me on this podcast. But we get a lot of emails and blah, blah, blah. And we're never trying to offend anyone. It's just when we each share our experiences we can pass on different imprinting to other women. And that's what I would love for you to know. So if you feel the need for more of a disclaimer even in your own experiences, then maybe this is your message to just look at that and say, "Is that true for me? Why do I believe that? Is that a box I put myself in? Am I unwilling to let go of that for A, B, or C reasons?" And I was all of those things, so hopefully that's come through. That I didn't just wake up without any effort and birth this baby in this perfect way.

I really tried hard. I really worked on my stuff. I really broke down some major walls I had up. I really had to ask myself some good questions. And I really had to be humble in that I had created a lot of my reality. Again, not a bad reality. But I really had, and that it was my chance to jump ship and believe new things or not. And that nobody else was going to do it for me just like nobody else can birth my baby. Nobody was going to tell me, "Hey, Maryn, that's not helping you," right? That's not anyone else's job. So it was up to me to consider my past and to consider this birth, this upcoming birth that I had and go through my shit. That's really what it comes down to, and we're all human. We all have stuff. And so there is probably not a person out there that doesn't have things they could think about or reconsider especially with birth on the horizon.

So I believed it was possible, and I think that's key. So if you're looking for more inspiration, we have lots of birth stories that are super cool to watch and read and listen to in our *13 Moons* course. That's one of the main reasons for taking that course, I think, is to be surrounded by women who are doing this work, who are visioning their birth experience, and who want to go down that road. Just FYI, even though this course may not be open by the time you hear this podcast, we're always reopening enrollment at different points in the year. So it's indiebirth.org/13moons. You'll see what that's all about. And like I said, if enrollment is open, you're welcome to join us. If it's not, then get on the list, and we'll let you know.

But anyway, it was more releasing control for me. And I think lots of women can identify with that idea just in life really, right? How much can we surrender? I mean how can we have strong intentions and be the creatrix of all things including life but still release control? Control is tension. So just another kind of thing to ponder on with your own experience. When we really, really want to control, then it can be hard to manifest in this really, really supple way. The last little part that I wanted to share that I hinted at was talking to your baby. I talked to Cove all of the time and wrote to her and recorded podcasts for her and recorded micro podcasts for her that are in our *13 Moons*. And yes. I thought she was a boy. That's true. And I was wrong. But it doesn't matter. Her soul is her soul. And I talked to her all the time, and I told her what I wanted. And I wanted to hear what she wanted. And I felt just through all of the communicative ways that this was what she wanted. And obviously, it is because, as I said, we work together when we're birthing with the person inside of us.

So consider this your opportunity to create whatever it is in your life you want whether it's birth or not really. Consider this your invitation to pass this imprint along to someone else by way of this podcast or really any of our resources. Talk about this with your pregnant friends. Have a birth circle on the sensations of birth. Hear other women when they want to share how it felt for them. And do your own work. Having a great birth experience, like I said, isn't always fully in our control. We recognize that as humans. But so much of it is. So much more of it is than we think. So what are your beliefs? What is your box? And what do you want? I do believe—and here's another belief—that it is our birth right to birth in bliss. And that word is overused perhaps especially here in Sedona. Bliss is a heavy marketing tool. And for me, that word feels really meaningful in relationship to her birth experience.

And truly in my life post birth, I feel blissful. I feel in a different space to support women. That feels really good because of her experience. I feel amazing in this postpartum in all of the ways in a way I haven't before, in ways that I've struggled in the past, and I think, again, it comes back to the bliss that her birth experience was. And I am just so happy if any of this has made any sense or felt meaningful to any of you at all because that is the mission to pass this vibration around as far as birth goes. And we know that

everyone won't experience it this way and doesn't need to or whatever. But so many of you will. And that will be a result of other women passing the torch and saying, "Birth can be what you want it to be."

So thanks for listening to my very long walk. I now need to get back for sure to little Cove and check out the Indie Birth site for new stuff. Again, the *13 Moons* is just a fantastic experience. We hope you'll check that out. And have a great day.

(closing music)