

(introductory music)

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MARYN: Welcome to Indie Birth's series of podcasts, *Taking Back Birth*. Hi, everyone. Maryn here today with one of my favorite things to do which is to talk with people that have experienced an autonomous pregnancy and an autonomous birth. And I know I'm going to be super inspired today by sharing Brittany and Conor and Ilya with you all today. So welcome, family. Share what you will about yourselves.

BRITTANY: Thank you so much, Maryn.

CONOR: Thanks for having us.

BRITTANY: Yeah. It feels like such an honor to be on your podcast.

MARYN: Aw. It is an honor on this end for sure.

BRITTANY: Thank you. Yeah. We—man. I just feel like we're four week postpartum right now. And we just had the most amazing ride with this pregnancy and birth. And there is so much I could say about it, but I think using the word autonomous feels really accurate. And I feel like it's been such a huge process of diving within in ourselves and really feeling out what has felt right for us. And it's just led to the most amazing magic. And it's been work. And it's been play, and it's just been so worthwhile and the whole process and has given us an opportunity to grow closer to ourselves and each other and to bring this being through really in the way that is really how we wanted to do it.

CONOR: Mm-hmm. Yeah. We were just talking about the topic of kind of self education, which I love, because that was a huge element of leading up to the actual birth itself. And that happened even before conception. And probably a year before conception we were really envisioning what kind of birth we wanted. And then the evolution of that really took place initially intellectually and then we really had to do a lot of work emotionally to maintain our vision.

BRITTANY: Yeah. Yeah. And I just recognize too if it's helpful to hear some facts. Yeah. We live in Austin, Texas. And we kind of have been traveling for awhile and just sort of settled in this space which we love. And we love coming back to. And we live a pretty odd life probably by most people's standards. We're really weird in a lot of different ways. We have really alternative lives and relationships. And so I think this was another way that we were able to step into more of our truth and our power around

something that was kind of radically different than norm in our society. And not because it was different but because it really felt right for us.

CONOR: Right.

MARYN: Yeah. We'll share some contact info at the end so people can check out your work and find you guys. But yeah. You're unique, I think, for sure in that sense that you're already stepping out of the box in your life in so many ways. So in a lot of ways, it's just followed suit. But what inspired this first thought, this first spark of going through your experience this way?

CONOR: I love that question.

BRITTANY: I love that question too. Well, I feel like when I first started thinking about bringing life into this world a long time ago—maybe ten years ago, I felt like it would make sense to do it at home. And I remember. I had dreadlocks at the time, and I was getting my dreads done with my dread artist in her home with her kids running around. And her youngest daughter just kept saying, “Babies come out of vagina.” And it was really cool. And we watched *The Business of Being Born*. And at the time, it was just revolutionary for me, and that was just—yeah. That was the first step into being like, “Oh yeah. I’m totally going to have a home birth.” And so home birth just stuck in there like that makes sense. And then—yeah. Like Conor said, we’ve been really intentional about wanting to bring this life through, and we felt this soul kind of reaching out to us for like a year.

And so we started to look into it more. And I talked with a woman that we had met in Thailand and through our events. And she just said—she was like, “I free birthed.” And she sent me this link to her talking about her free birth. And I was just like, “What the heck is that?” And the first time I listened to her story, and she had done a lotus birth. And she had eaten some of the placenta too. And I was just like, “This is crazy. What?” She just had—I was telling Conor. She just had her baby at home with her partner. And that’s it.

CONOR: Yeah. We were both just like, “Oh my god. That is wild.”

BRITTANY: It is wild. And then it stuck in my head, and I was like, “That’s amazing.” And we came home from Thailand. And I connected with a friend here who is really into—yeah. More of natural mama movement. And she had been listening to your podcast. And I asked her about this free birth thing, if she had heard about it. And she was obsessed. And she just like gave me a couple of resources. And then it was just—yeah. It was basically overnight just listening to a couple things, and it was just like it all sort of started to make sense. So much sense. And the more I listened, and

the more research we did it was just like oh yeah. Totally. That's what we're going to do.

CONOR: Yeah. I would say it definitely became the clear choice pretty quickly. But initially, the first hearing of it, it's just something I had never heard about. And I had this reaction like, "Whoa. She's crazy." But then it didn't take long. It was just like hearing it a couple more times through podcasts like yours, Maryn, where you hear real live people who have these incredible stories that are so different than what you often hear in traditional set ups. Certainly with the hospital but also sometimes with midwives and just doing more research, we had heard some other experiences that were just less than ideal, I think. And because we are living this life that is pretty radical already, there's a lot of autonomy and self led action that we were—we're used to. And so this just kind of made—it kind of fell into place with everything else we're doing.

BRITTANY: Yeah. And I guess one huge thing that sticks out to me is hearing about the natural process of birth and the hormones of labor and all these things it was just—it went from being this crazy concept like how would that be possible to, "Oh, this is pretty—everything is perfectly orchestrated." We could just get out of the way and not disturb the process, and this wouldn't be doing anything crazy. This is actually—yeah. This is actually the most normal thing we could do. And so then it became like, "Okay. What does it mean to us to have an undisturbed birth? What do we need to be able to get out of the way of creating any sort of interventions or having anything that could come into our space?" And that really is what we're feeling out.

CONOR: Yeah.

MARYN: Yeah. I mean that's so beautiful. And I think the attraction to free birth or whatever you want to call it, even just undisturbed birth, is so common sense especially when you feel like you're not alone and even just in watching videos or hearing people's story. And I want to talk more about your process in realizing that for yourselves because I think it's one thing to know that that's the best kind of intellectually, but there's so much work that goes into someone making it happen. I think it's just where we are in our culture and what we're exposed to even when we're kind of radical in our lives. There's so much that we have to process I feel like. So I want to hear from you. Maybe some things that came up that you worked through or wherever you want to take it. Even I know you did a lot of research, and I was so impressed by that with you. But how did you balance that with what was coming from inside? I mean there's so many really cool deep topics we could explore.

BRITTANY: Yeah. I love that. And I love that you say that about the balance because it really felt that way for me. There was a time that it felt really important to do a lot of

research, to listen to a lot of other people's experiences, to educate myself, and then there came a point where it felt like, "Okay. Now I really—now I'm kind of done with that. And now I really just want to be going within, and I want to maybe not listening to other people's stories. I want to not be hearing people's opinions around me. I want to just connect with myself especially in the last trimester." That felt super important.

MARYN: That is so important. And I always wish more people would identify with that portion of pregnancy being such an inner journey. The world is so counter that, right? We're still measuring and testing and doing all the things at the end that take women away. And then we're surprised when, in their birth, they can't access that material. So that's so, so, so smart. What kind of stuff do you feel like was coming up for you or were you working on when you started to turn away from what everybody else was saying? Anything you want to share?

BRITTANY: Yeah. For sure. It was kind of like a process of any time I would hear something that inside of me I felt like some fear or some clenching or resistance around or like I don't know what I would do in that case I just—for me, at that time, it felt better to look into it more. And it was so helpful. So for example, even with people who I know who have had home births that were really beautiful—and we had friends that recently had a home birth in Hawaii. And they were so worried because the cord was wrapped around the neck of their child when it came out. And I just felt like, "Oh yeah. That does sound scary." And the more I looked into it I was like, "Oh, that doesn't scare me at all now. I really—that sounds normal. And that makes sense. And the baby is going to get what it needs. It's going to be fine." And so it was just kind of those kind of things. That was definitely one of them. Yeah. There's a lot of pretty much anything I think that I had heard enough about, and I didn't have my own answers for or my own peace around. That was kind of something I looked into. So hemorrhaging is another one that I feel like there's this fear around it. Tearing also. Fear around these things.

And it was cool just to feel out my own relationship. I didn't really have much fear around hemorrhaging, but it sounded cool to learn more about. And then yeah. Tearing. I did notice I had fear around, so that was really interesting. Yeah. Just to see the different ways things came up and to recognize areas that I could be as prepared as possible. And then also areas where it felt really good to surrender and to kind of go in deeper and know I don't need to know—I don't need to have all the answers. I really believe in myself. I really believe that at the time I'll know what to do. And also this deeper surrender for me which felt like I really trust the natural process of life and of birth and also of death. And I don't feel like that's my path. But I also feel like everything is just—everything is unfolding perfectly. And there is some sort of really nice deep surrender in not feeling like I needed to control every little element. So yeah.

I guess it's all been this huge balance between that part of me, that more intuitive flowing, trust the Universe, and then the (inaudible) part of me that is type A and did want to write up all these things and then have a session with you, Maryn, and be like, "Okay. This is what I think I would do in all of these cases. Does that make sense?"

CONOR: But I think we also kept returning to the knowledge that the best thing we could do for the process is to be in a peaceful and relaxed and positive place. And so even with all that practical research you were doing, there was always a return to this more centered, emotionally balanced space where we felt like we understood—once we could both drop into that space together during birth, stepping out of the way, and letting the natural process take place was fundamental for it to happen the way it needed to happen. And, of course, there's practical things that can be helpful to get us there. But ultimately, that was what we saw as maybe the peak of what we could do for it.

BRITTANY: Yeah. And I remember geeking out actually getting really excited. We had—we got your—the *How to Have an Indie Birth* program before the *13 Moons* program was available. And we were driving to the Asian market, which is a long drive for us. And we're listening to this just understanding for the first time hearing about the hormones of birth. And we were just—of labor and birth. And we were just geeking out looking at each other like, "Oh my god. This is so cool. Look at this." How simple. How beautiful, perfectly orchestrated it was. And that felt like a really pivotal moment for me because it went from being this idea of, "Okay. I know birth works, and it's this natural process to being like,"—thinking about all the things I could get excited about. Like, "Wow. My body is going to do this and that." I don't have to do anything.

CONOR: Yeah.

MARYN: Yeah. Oh my gosh. There's so much good stuff there, you guys. We could talk forever. Man. Yeah. No. I love it all. I love the balance of using your brain and then settling in to that heart space to make choices. And I feel like that's just such valuable advice to anyone who is planning this route or considering this route is no matter what your choices end up being, I think, where you birth, who you birth with, that has to be—I mean that has to be part of the equation. Although people choose different things, I get too that some people maybe don't want to learn a darn thing, and they're just going to settle in to what they know. But I just personally resonate with seeing you walk that balance so beautifully and, like you said, returning home. Isn't that what we all seek to do in all areas of life? Is to return home to that space. And I love too what you said, Brittany, it's not like we expect the journey to necessarily be perfect. We have to entertain all the aspects of life and death experience, and I think that's just such a key to having an autonomous experience. You can't have blinders on to the enormity of the

possibility of what can happen too. I think it can be an uncomfortable conversation for some people. But if we don't entertain life and death and both sides of the coin then it's like we're seeking to control it just in the way that many people do around our experiences.

BRITTANY: Yeah.

CONOR: Absolutely.

BRITTANY: I totally feel that. I think it was maybe—we read *Gentle Birth, Gentle Mothering* with Sarah Buckley. I think she—it's in that book. She says like birth is as safe as life. Or do you remember the quote? It's something like that.

CONOR: I know.

BRITTANY: But it was just—yeah.

CONOR: [cross talk] Okay. That sounds right. Yeah.

BRITTANY: It just stuck with me. Like okay. This is no safer or less safer than the—than everyday life.

CONOR: Right. Crossing the street or taking the stairs or whatever it is. Yeah. There's risk—quote on quote risk in everything we do.

BRITTANY: Yeah.

CONOR: But what really resonates (inaudible)—what's going to be the most centered decision for ourselves and—yeah. This definitely made sense.

MARYN: Yeah. I'd love to hear more from you, Brittany—and I mean really both of you because you made a lot of these choices together I know. How you might advise people to discern fear from intuition? I think that's a big discussion in our world. I mean I hear it a lot. Just people trying to suss that out. Intuition doesn't always mean that everything goes perfectly. Intuition is—it's deeper than that. And so I don't know. I'd just be curious how you felt like that in your body and if there is a choice or something that comes to mind where that felt like a relevant point. I don't know.

BRITTANY: Yeah. That's such a great question. And I love that because I feel like it's just been a life lesson for me, a process especially in these last ten years where I feel like I've really been tapping into myself more. And for me, it's such a feeling space. For me, intuition feels like light and also deep, and it feels exciting. And it feels like—it feels like pre thought in a way. It's like I know this thing is a part of me. And fear really feels like clenching and resistance, and it's easy to feel in my body because I'll feel like all of

a sudden I need to do something about it. Or I need to—yeah. Or justify something or I literally feel like a clenching somewhere in my body. Yeah. Intuition feels expansive, and it feels easy most of the time. And it feels natural. Sometimes it feels too easy. And I think that maybe for me at different times that I've—my logical brain has gotten in the way and second guessed it and been like, "Well, shouldn't I need to prepare for this or that?" We have this saying I think in our society which is like, "I need to worry about that. Or I don't need to worry about that." And it's this funny idea that we need to worry about anything as opposed to just be with it or observe it. And for me, fear feels like I need to worry about something right now. And if I'm not worrying about something, I should start worrying about something, so I'm taking care of things.

CONOR: Mm-hmm.

MARYN: Right.

BRITTANY: Yeah. As opposed to being in that flow state, which definitely feels more intuitive to me.

CONOR: Yeah. And it does seem like, as a culture, we tend to unite under fear often and worry and being our primary business is through social media like YouTube and Instagram. We get a lot of feedback from the outside world. And we were getting a lot of these kind of fear based questions that started with, "What if? But what if this thing? And what if that thing? What if that thing?" And it was like, "Wow. I can really see when we're not in a centered place how that type of external information can be really overwhelming." And I think for our sake that intuition that we kept returning to is very self led. And it didn't mean that we weren't taking in external information like books or having conversations with people we resonated with, but it did mean that we had to kind of filter out a lot of the fears that our culture wanted to give to us. We just had to say, "No, thank you," and keep kind of reinforcing it right here between each other.

BRITTANY: Yes.

CONOR: Our support, I think, was really important to keep reinforcing it. Hearing and saying, "No. We got this. We got this."

BRITTANY: Definitely. I love what you—yeah.

CONOR: No. That's it. Mm-hmm.

BRITTANY: Yeah. Talking about reinforcing whatever it is that resonates with us. And I think that we can do that both ways. We can enforce fear, or we can reinforce our intuition. And for me, it was like, "Okay. Right now my community and support system

is really right here between the two of us.” And it was like, “How can I expand that and have more people on my team?” And for me, I found I’d rather have very few people that I feel really safe with than a bigger pool. And I just surround myself with that. And that mostly looked like falling asleep to Indie Birth podcasts. And it was just so reassuring. And I feel like the people we surround ourselves with or the energies we surround ourselves with matter so much. And we really get to decide. And I think that sometimes maybe we don’t all know that, and we’re—we forget. Or we haven’t made that choice to really be discerning about the energies in our space. And then it can feel like we’re getting off track, and it wasn’t even our decision. But just remembering it’s really my job to take care of what and who and the energies that are coming into my space, and that just matters so much.

MARYN: Yeah. Yeah. That’s taking responsibility. That’s taking responsibility and is so smart and is also, I think, increasingly difficult in the world we’re in especially with social media even for people that don’t have a big following like you guys do. I mean I think it’s just so pervasive, right? You can get on there. And there’s a billion of that kind of thing going on and negative comments, and I remember, even in my last pregnancy, feeling like really impressionable and, like you said, that palpable feeling. Like I’d read some of the stuff and just like it affects you in such a different way when you’re pregnant. So you have to just be on guard for that. And like you said, create your safe space, your safe support. I think that is an absolutely amazing suggestion that people should pay attention to because it doesn’t matter what anyone else thinks. I work with people that want to take responsibility as well, but yet they’re still maybe listening to the mother or the mother-in-law or letting things kind of infiltrate. And while I think there is a learning and growing process there, ultimately, you are it. You’re the family. You’re the ones that make the choices for this new creation of a person. I mean what else can be more important?

BRITTANY: Yeah.

CONOR: Totally. Yeah. And just want to add that because this is a pretty—at this time, an alternative approach to birth, I think, we all—when we choose this—have to be a bit of a lighthouse. And that’s just kind of a role that we kind of have to take on because it is such a beautiful practice and such, in my opinion, important practice that we aren’t always going to get the support that we need. But we can teach other people how we want them to show up for us. And it’s really okay to let someone know like, “Hey, I don’t want to receive that feedback. And if you do want to share this space with me, I really need you to come at it from this way or be really supportive,” that sort of thing. So yeah. And that’s really what we try to do is model how we wanted people to communicate with

us. And if they didn't, we would just erase the comment very—without any question. Just that doesn't feel good, remove it because it's not going to serve anyone.

MARYN: Yeah.

BRITTANY: Yeah.

CONOR: That was an important part of the process, I guess.

BRITTANY: Yeah. We had our assistant start removing comments for us that we wouldn't have to see.

CONOR: Yeah. We didn't even have to look at it.

BRITTANY: And most of our—most of the feedback we received from the outside world was really positive. Then from our families too. But that 10% that isn't can just get in there, and it matters so much.

MARYN: Yeah. Yeah. For sure. I have felt that as well. And I think you guys feel the same way. I mean there is no point in arguing or convincing. It's just an opportunity for you to revisit your own truth which is all that I think any of us are about which is the irony, right? It's not an us against them thing. It's like this is what is right for us. And like you said, Conor, it was such a great way of putting it. You can just be the lighthouse for other people too in that. Follow what's right for you.

CONOR: Yeah. Absolutely.

MARYN: We're all so different. So can we move on to telling this birth story? Because honestly, I haven't even heard it. And I'm super excited.

CONOR: Oh cool.

MARYN: It was an experience. So yeah.

BRITTANY: Yeah. We'd love to. Man. I feel like—for some reason, I notice I always want to start the birth story two days before because it just feels like there was a couple cool things that happened.

MARYN: Sure.

BRITTANY: So Ilya came through. I love how you say came earth side, and that's just really stuck with me. Ilya came earth side on a Monday. And on that Friday night, Conor and I practiced partner acrobatics. So what that looks like a lot of the time is me balanced upside down on his hands.

MARYN: Which is incredible, and we are going to link so people can be amazed by your photos. I'm blown away every time we see it. Anyway, proceed.

BRITTANY: So we actually went to this Acro gym here in Austin that happens every Friday night. And we just did the best Acro of our whole pregnancy which was so cool because I was 38 weeks pregnant.

CONOR: It was so great.

MARYN: That's amazing.

BRITTANY: And then the next night was the full moon, and I had just been feeling like ever since I put my quote due date in the calendar—wow. It would be so cool if Ilya came at 38 weeks instead of at 40 weeks because that would be on the full moon. And I just felt like that made sense. Hey. And so we did this full moon ceremony. Conor and I did with this other really special thing in our lives. And we drew tarot cards, and we watched the full moon.

CONOR: We talked about what birth is going to look like.

BRITTANY: Just told Ilya, "We're ready." Then we went down and bathed in the spring water just under the full moon. And yeah. Then that night I think things really started. And it's cool because all pregnancy I kind of had been saying to Ilya like, "Hey, what do you think about the full moon. 38 weeks."

CONOR: Like, "You do your thing. It's all good. But also,"—

BRITTANY: But also you could come—and that night we got home. And Conor really didn't sleep well that night.

CONOR: Yeah. Just for whatever reason, I just had this sense like, "I got things to do." And I just had—it was just little things like I wanted to hang these blackout curtains in our room and organize the fridge and clean up the food. And I wasn't thinking at that time like, "Oh, this is going to happen tomorrow." I was actually thinking, "This will probably happen in a week, so I've got some things to do. And I'm going to stay home tomorrow and take care of those."

BRITTANY: Yeah. And that night, I too was like—so I kind of woke up when you were up. And I was just feeling all this pressure in my pelvis. And I'd been feeling so many different sensations throughout—a lot of tightening and all kinds of different things. But I was like, "This is interesting." And it was kind of hard to walk. And I usually—or we usually go to ecstatic dance on Sunday mornings here. And I was like, "Oh, man. That stinks. Maybe I won't get to dance in the morning." And then I woke—woke up in the

morning, and I was like, “Oh, I feel great.” And so I wanted to go to dance. And Conor, you really hadn’t slept. And you’re like, “I got to stay home.”

CONOR: I got to do these curtains.

BRITTANY: I got to do things. Which is interesting because for you to miss dance is a big deal.

CONOR: Very unusual.

BRITTANY: So I went to ecstatic dance. And I was kind of feeling maybe some new sensations at that time. but really didn’t—I don’t know. It didn’t feel radically different. And then afterwards, just checked in with Conor, and Conor was still doing stuff here. So I went to Barton Springs and was lying out under these trees and bathing in the spring water and hanging out with some friends. And it was at some point there where I started to realize everybody is talking, but I can’t really pay attention right now because I’m just feeling these sensations. And I had been feeling them for months, but it was like kind of feel like I need to change positions or just not focus on this conversation right now. And it just sort of hit me. I’m like this has been happening every few minutes. And so then I was just like I just felt pretty uncomfortable. And I just told my friends. I’m like, “I’m going to go home and either poop or have a baby.”

MARYN: That’s awesome.

BRITTANY: So yeah. I came home. And I just walked in the door, and I told Conor. I’m like, “I really think I need to poop.” And I couldn’t. I couldn’t poop. But I—when I wiped myself, there was just a little bit of blood. And that hadn’t happened all pregnancy. I didn’t have any little bit of blood, so I was just like, “Oh my gosh.” Yeah. I really feel like this is going to happen. And I showed Conor and told him. I was like, “Hey, I think we’re going to have a baby.”

CONOR: Yeah. And I just was so not expecting that. I think my face just got this weird color, and I didn’t say anything. I’m very serious.

BRITTANY: Very serious.

CONOR: Which is not what I had envisioned for myself. My vision was, “Okay. Here we go.” But I—and I did eventually get to that space. But initially, I had some anxiety of the process, I guess. Just like panic attack.

BRITTANY: It was so cool. Our dance—Conor and I danced throughout the whole thing. It was perfect.

CONOR: It was perfect. Very balanced.

BRITTANY: It was so balanced. I was so excited when I got home. I was like, “Don’t worry about it. I’m so excited about this. We’re going to do great.” I’m like, “I just need a couple things.” I’m like, “I really want you to take a picture of me because I didn’t take my 38-week picture update. And I want to weigh myself,” because I was so curious how much you had been lifting in Acro. And I was so curious how much birth was going to weigh. So it just sounded fun to do those things, and I was just like really businesslike about it. And then I just started vlogging because I wanted to track some of the process and doing my own thing. And Conor just started—for hours, you were just sort of organizing the space and setting up stuff.

CONOR: Yeah. Birthing tub took—it’s a little bit of a process. And yeah. And then as I was setting things up, I started to drop into the space more and feel more like how I had envisioned myself showing up which is good.

BRITTANY: Yeah. And it was really fun for awhile. That all started at about 2:30 in the afternoon. And I would say it was really fun. And then around 8:00, we were checking in because it was *The Game of Thrones* season finale that night. And it’s like the only show—

CONOR: We’ve ever watched.

BRITTANY: - that we’ve ever watched. And we’re like, “Are we going to watch this?”

CONOR: Yeah.

BRITTANY: (inaudible).

CONOR: We might be able to.

BRITTANY: Conor was like, “That might be a little intense for this night.” And we were going to watch it. And then I remember you were—it was like 8:00. And you were like, “It might be a little late.” And I just felt like, “Yeah.” You’re like, “Do you think you could sleep?” And I just said, “No. I really don’t think I could sleep. But I could lie down.” And then you asked, “Well, do you want to make love?” And we both really did want to. So that was at 9:00. And that was really nice.

CONOR: Yeah.

BRITTANY: And then after that, it was—yeah. Things started to intensify. And we have a white board. And on the white board, I wrote, “Midnight. Intense.” A

MARYN: That's a hoot.

BRITTANY: I kind of remember saying like, "Okay. I'm ready." I know that I'm not going to—we're not going to get there at this—things are going to have to shift a little bit. And I just said, "Okay. Let's do this. I'm ready." But it wasn't ready. I mean I was just as ready as I could have been. But then when things started getting intense, I was like, "Oh my god. This is crazy."

CONOR: Yeah. And it was pretty intense for awhile for you. And as you kind of were dropping into that more intense place and I've kind of referred to it as more animal place, and you got a little more growly and just a little more like (makes noise), that's when I got even more centered and more grounded. And that was this beautiful dance that we kind of created within our home setting here. And it was beautiful. It was so beautiful to be able to support you, and I felt like you really were needing that or could use that the most. And it just felt really good. And also, I was having my own intensity happening, but it felt like I could be more grounded as I knew that I could offer you support.

BRITTANY: Yeah. And so what it kind of looked like general was moving from these different spaces, we had the birthing tub set up in our bedroom and a space on the floor I could be. And then I was in the living room. We had a little floor mattress set up. And that—you took a couple little naps there, and I laid down next to you. And I was using these vibrators on my back just to sort of relax which was nice. And I was kind of like dancing around sometimes. Sometimes just supporting myself half doubled over and a lot of the time in the tub. Just in and out of the tub. I think you filled it up like four times.

CONOR: Yeah. Mm-hmm.

BRITTANY: And we just kept adding water. And then it was like—yeah. I remember through the middle of the night I really thought it would be done by morning. And it was maybe by 4:00 a.m., and it wasn't. It wasn't near there. And we were just feeling like, "Ugh." And I remember just thinking like, "This sucks. This isn't fun anymore. This is hard." Yeah. And at 6:00 a.m., I was just like—yeah. It was interesting too. It was good to be in those spaces and feel like okay. This sucks. What could I do about it? And I just felt like there's nothing really. Just to be here. That's all I can do. I didn't find any comfort in the idea like, "Oh, well, I could go to this place. Or I could have someone else here." It wasn't like that. I just felt like, "This just sucks, and it's hard. And I'm pissed off that it's so hard."

MARYN: Right.

BRITTANY: Yeah. And then at 6:00, we messages you, Maryn. And that was just—it was so amazing. It was nice to—I think that we talked about it beforehand. And it was just nice—it was amazing feeling like that was an option. That was something we had always envisioned. It would be so nice to have someone that we really trust and believe in that we could reach out to. Just if something came up that we couldn't really foresee.

CONOR: Mm-hmm.

BRITTANY: And it felt so perfect. And I knew it was probably 4:00 a.m. your time. There. So I didn't expect to hear back from you any time soon. And then you messaged a few hours later, and you're just like—and I think I had basically said like—very loosely what was going on. And I was like, "Yeah. This is hard," or whatever. "And I feel like I'm not progressing," or something like that. And so then you said you could talk. And we talked to you around 10:00, I think that was, our time. And I remember I was in the birthing tub. And having some pretty intense waves during the call, and I just kept handing the phone to Conor. Hey, you.

CONOR: Yeah. And I think I looked at the call after. And we talked for like—it was either under 8 minutes or under 9 minutes or something. It wasn't long. But it was so helpful.

BRITTANY: It made all the difference.

CONOR: Yeah. I just—I started crying. We were on the phone, I think, just because I felt like, "Oh, there's someone who cares and knows what we're talking about." And you said, "It's going to be okay." Or whatever it was that you said. It was simple. It was like, "Oh, yeah. It sounds pretty good. You sound like you got this."

BRITTANY: You're like, "That sounds totally normal."

CONOR: But it was really a game changer at that point. And that's just what we needed. We needed that little bit of just, "You got this from the outside world." And it was perfect.

BRITTANY: Yeah. Because at the time, I just kind of felt like—I mean it had been so important to me not to monitor the process in any sort of way.

CONOR: Right.

BRITTANY: Which was the same with pregnancy. We really just wanted it to be a natural process, for me, whatever that meant. And yeah. Hearing you say, "That's normal. You are progressing even if you feel like you're not. And you're doing great," and I just felt like okay. Cool. We're doing great. We got this. It's just hard. That's

what it is. It's just hard. And after that, things really shifted for us. And within the next hour, we—I felt like—I had started to feel the urge to push. And there was this popping feeling inside of me. And I was thinking—I was kind of always envisioning that they might—that my waters might not open before birth. And so when that happened, I was thinking, "Okay. This feels like it's part of my sac and my bag of waters and that Ilya's head might be in it." But the head wasn't in it. And it was just part of my sac. And it just started hanging out of me. Do you want to—

CONOR: Yeah. It was like fist sized about and super clear white. And it was really cool. Just like, "Whoa. That's wild."

MARYN: That's really cool.

CONOR: And you were standing at that point in our other room and just kind of touching it. And it was like, "Oh my god. This is so cool."

BRITTANY: It was so cool.

MARYN: Yeah.

CONOR: So that was cool just to see the physical representation of progression and be like, "Okay. Things are happening. Things are happening."

MARYN: Right.

CONOR: And then it just kind of opened up on its own. And it was just kind of dangling there.

BRITTANY: It was hanging out of me for awhile. It was cool.

CONOR: Yeah.

BRITTANY: Yeah. And then after that, I sort of reached inside of me. And I was like, "Okay. Well, if that's not her head, then this things I'm feeling a little further up that's probably the head." And yeah. Then it just kind of—I was in the birthing tub for most of the rest of the time. That was probably around 11:00. And Ilya came at 2:30. And so it was just like feeling it come down a little bit more, a little bit more. And then the last—I would say like 30 to 40 minutes it took to sort of birth the head. And I would feel it at the opening of my vagina. My vaginal opening. And then it came out a little bit and then go back in. And then come out a little bit. And Conor (inaudible). It's funny too because—it's funny though (inaudible). But I was like, "Okay." I was like, "Conor, the head is taking up all my vaginal opening. And then I'm still feeling all this pressure on

my perineum and my ass, and there's more head. I don't know how it's going to fit through." I was like, "It's like fire, baby. I don't rip my shit."

CONOR: It was so sweet the way you said it. It was like, "Oh, please. How is this going to work?"

BRITTANY: Yeah. But it was cool because the more it came out the more I was like, "Oh, it does work." And it was like, of course. The body—it's set up like that. It's going to be okay. And then—yeah. It was probably—I don't know. 30, 40 minutes of that. And the last one, I was like I can't—I just had to give it a little extra. I can't feel this almost come out of me again and not actually come out of me. And yeah. It was just this little extra at the end of the wave. And then I felt her hand—her head in my hand. And I was just like instantly like calm and grounded, and it was amazing. I just felt that. I just told Conor. I was like, "I have the head in my hand, and I can feel her little ear."

CONOR: Yeah. For the last three or four hours, Brittany was in this super intense state. Super animal, like literally looking at me and growling, and I was putting this cold washcloth on her back because she was just breaking out in sweats. And super intense. And then as soon as you were holding Ilya's head, it was just like peace. She's just completely different person. And then I lost my shit and just started crying and was like, "Oh my,"—because as soon as I knew she was in a more centered place, it's like okay. I can now feel. Yeah. So then I was fumbling around trying to—we had talked about getting some good video of that. And so I got the camera. I was like just had no idea what I was doing. I had operated this camera for years, and I was just like, "How? What is this thing?" It was confusing.

BRITTANY: It was so sweet. And Conor was just like, "Okay. Baby."

CONOR: I don't even know who I was talking to.

BRITTANY: It was so sweet. And I just knew that okay. In a minute, there is going to be another wave, and her whole body is going to come out. And I just felt so—I'm like, "Cool. The head is out. Everything is done basically." And that's exactly what happened.

CONOR: Two minutes later.

BRITTANY: Yeah. And it was just so—it was so easy. Her whole body came out. I held up this being. And I was just—yeah. I was just holding our baby. And it was so nice because I felt like Conor—your reaction. You were just sobbing. And like, "Ilya." Just saying her name and like, "You're here." And all this stuff. And it was so cool because that felt somewhere that was my internal reaction. But at the time, I was just

like cool. Very businesslike. Looking at our baby. Great. I mean Ilya looked amazing. I mean that—I'm sure part of that is being birthed underwater. But there was—just very little anything going on. And after 15 seconds, Ilya started crying, and it was perfect and just clearing out her lungs. And I was just like yeah. Making sure you're breathing. Just welcoming Ilya earth side.

CONOR: Yeah. It was perfect.

BRITTANY: It was perfect. We were in that space in the birthing tub for 5 to 10 minutes. And then I was like, "Okay. Cool. I want to get out and birth the placenta." And we had gotten just a bowl and a colander. And Conor brought those in for me, and it was so easy. I just squatted over the bowl, and it came right out. I was really curious how that would be. I don't know, at the time, if I pushed at all or anything. It felt like it just naturally came out of me.

CONOR: Yeah. And then we just kind of—

BRITTANY: Chilled out.

CONOR: - just in this crazy place. There was not a baby there, and then there is a baby there. And it's like in a matter of minutes or seconds even is how it seemed to me because I couldn't see into the birth tub water at all. So it was like—it was just an incredible thing. And then—yeah. I think we just hung out with them.

BRITTANY: For an hour.

CONOR: Maybe we slept. Maybe we didn't. I don't really remember. But we were just in a totally different place. I think all the hormones were just filling up the room, and it felt—it just felt incredible.

BRITTANY: Yeah. And another thing that was really cool is we didn't tell anyone that—

CONOR: Yeah. Intentionally.

BRITTANY: - Ilya was coming or anything. So it just felt like you were the only person we contacted, Maryn. So once we got out of our little bubble an hour later, we were like, "Let's send Maryn a picture." And then we—

MARYN: That's the best.

BRITTANY: Yeah. And then we got to—a little while later we recorded this little video for our families. And it was really—it was so simple really. It was so simple.

CONOR: Yeah. And one of the highlights was just looking at each other and being like, “We did it. We did it.” And it wasn’t like in spite of all those people but a little bit. Yeah. We did it even though they said we couldn’t.

BRITTANY: Yeah.

CONOR: Just some of those comments that we had gotten that stuck in there for me and just being like, “I knew we could do it.” And it just felt so satisfying. And I felt really, really, really proud of you. It’s a good feeling.

BRITTANY: Yeah. I remember afterwards feeling like I never—I mean, of course, none of us ever need to feel this way. But I felt like I never needed to feel inadequate ever again. That’s the most badass thing I’ve ever done. It felt 100 times more badass and intense and harder than anything I’d ever done. Yeah. It was really cool.

CONOR: Yeah. Yeah.

MARYN: Oh my gosh. You guys are so amazing. You are such a rock star. I just can’t even. It’s so—you’re right. It is so simple. But yeah. The amount of work you did to get to that place where it felt simple is incredible. And your partnership is just so beautiful. I love hearing how you both held both of those different places, and that’s so unique nowadays. I don’t—I mean and as a midwife too I don’t know that I even really get to see that because people are kind of also looking to me to hold some of that—some of the balance. I mean it’s not wrong. It’s just the balance is different often. And it’s still incredible what women are able to do. But you guys sharing this together, and it’s just great. It’s funny and beautiful and simple, and I appreciate sharing the rawness of it too. It is hard. I think people also need to hear that. Just because you’re owning, just because you’re being responsible doesn’t mean your baby falls out in an hour.

BRITTANY: Right. Totally.

MARYN: It’s freaking hard. And you have moments. I think of when we talked. And the expression that always comes into my head at that moment in labor or for some people at different points is, “You feel kind of lost at sea.” It’s just you’re both in that altered state. It’s not because it isn’t working. It’s not because you don’t know. It’s just—yeah. You’re purposefully kind of out because that’s where you need to be. So yeah. Getting a little bit grounded here and there as you needed to sounded like perfect.

BRITTANY: Yeah. It was super helpful. That’s totally what it felt like.

CONOR: That's a great way of putting it. I feel like—yeah. For both of us. We were both there. Like, "Ahh."

MARYN: Yeah. Yeah. Gosh, thank you so much for sharing.

CONOR: Yeah. Thanks so much for having us. It's such an honor to share with you on your podcast something that we really relied on for our education and our centeredness more than anything.

BRITTANY: Yeah. Our community too.

CONOR: We so appreciate it. Yeah.

BRITTANY: Yeah. And there was actually a podcast—a birth story you had here which is so great. And I have thought of it so many times. And it was a couple, and they were sharing together. And yeah.

CONOR: Mm-hmm. That was a nice story.

BRITTANY: It was really nice and really cool for both of us to hear. So it feels like—yeah. Kind of amazing and magical to be able to come full circle and have our own ideal birth and being able to share it. And yeah. Just to be—I don't know. It's really—it's other worldly. There's no real words I can share. And it's almost like I don't want the magic to be lost, and it's almost hard to talk about how magical the experience of birth is which I'm sure you understand. And there's no way to put it into words. But to be able to share a little bit of that magic here feels like—yeah. Such an honor.

MARYN: Yeah. No. I so appreciate it, and I think everyone listening does. And I totally get it. There aren't really words. And it's your own experience inside your own self. And then between you as a family but just feeling your energy here, I think, is like—that's the magical point for everyone else. They'll have their own experiences but knowing that it's possible, knowing that there is a journey that people take, and knowing that it's hard but you can do it is what I always say. It's hard, but you can do it. Is such a great message. So I love you guys. I'm so—

CONOR: We love you too.

BRITTANY: I love you so much, Maryn.

CONOR: Thank you. Yeah.

BRITTANY: Yeah. Thank you.

MARYN: One last thing. Let's share with people where they can find you in case they have questions or just want to follow you guys on social media or wherever you want to share. Go ahead.

CONOR: Cool.

BRITTANY: Cool. Yeah. Probably the best way is just to Google Conor and Brittany. Even if you spell our names wrong, we will probably come up. And we have a couple of YouTube channels and a website.

CONOR: We have one YouTube channel that's called *Conor and Brittany Family and Lifestyle*. In that, we talk a lot more specifically about baby and lifestyle stuff. And then we have another one that's more centered on relationships and communication and sex positivity. So we have two different YouTube channels.

BRITTANY: Yeah.

CONOR: I love them both. And then we—yeah. We have our website as well.

MARYN: Awesome. Yeah. People should totally check that out since there is so many cool aspects of you guys and what you have to share. And this was only one tiny little sliver of your really cool lives.

CONOR: Appreciate that.

BRITTANY: Thanks, Maryn. We feel the same about you.

MARYN: Aw, well, especially as Ilya grows, I know you guys will have lots to share and lots to inspire people. So I look forward to following that and keeping in touch and all that. So thanks, again. And thanks, everyone, for listening. Check out our new Patreon platform. It's patreon.com/indiebirth where you can be more a part of the community as we remove ourselves actually from a lot of social media. But check that out and see you over there. Thanks for listening.

(closing music)