

(introductory music)

MARYN: Welcome to *Taking Back Birth*, a podcast for women who know the truth about birth and those who want to explore the path of radical birth love. I'm your host, Maryn Green. *Taking Back Birth* celebrates the power you have to make decisions in alignment with your own truth. Decisions not subject to anyone else's authority. Decisions that create experiences that will change your life. *Taking Back Birth* is a production of the Indie Birth Private Contract Association and indiebirth.org. No material on this podcast should be considered medical advice. Birth is not a medical event.

In lieu of me babbling on this week's podcast, I asked two men to take over. I'm so excited to have my husband, Jason, and my good friend, Nathan, speak with each other on this episode. I think you'll be inspired by their unique perspectives on the birth process and hope that you'll share this chat with the men in your life.

JASON: All right. So welcome to the podcast. My name is Jason. I am Maryn's husband, affectionately referred to sometimes as Mr. Indie Birth. And I am here with Dr. Nathan Riley, an OB/GYN, and somebody who also specializes in palliative medicine. And today we are talking—we are two guys talking about birth. So welcome.

NATHAN: That is—yeah. We don't have this yet. This is what we're missing in the birth world is what do we do as men in this whole thing. So it's a pleasure. Thanks, Jason.

JASON: Yeah. Well, I'll take the first question here since you are—I forget how long before the birth of your first child.

NATHAN: So Stephanie is at 36 ½ weeks. I know that's kind of a rough guess. So we're expecting a baby somewhere around middle to late February. So we're about—we're almost there. A couple weeks away.

JASON: So what has that been feeling like to you as you get closer?

NATHAN: Well, I've always come to kind of conceptualize birth as a medical thing. And as you know through the friendship that I've developed with Maryn, that has very, very gradually, at times, and then very suddenly at other times changed where even when you're first inspired—or honored with the privilege of being a part of a woman's birth you know there's some magic there. And then if you're studying it and you're trying to quote help it along in some way or support women from a medical standpoint, you naturally are kind of taught to pathologize it and to always look for something that could go wrong and something that you could intervene in. And so throughout my training and my

career, it's been a very medical thing. And now that I'm taking care of my own wife—and, of course, I have attended almost 1,000 births now.

JASON: Wow.

NATHAN: I mean it's been a lot that I've been a part of. But that was always a person that I'm quote here to help, so to speak, and I'm using air quotes intentionally because I've now learned that there's not really much I can do to help except in that rare instance. It's very different being with my wife though because she is—I'm getting to be with her every single day. I wake up with her every morning. We go to bed every night. I get to—we take baths together. We take showers together. We take walks together. We try to work out together. I get to see her at every moment and get to see the changes that are taking place. So I can't remember. Did you ask me how am I preparing for it?

JASON: I just asked you how your feelings have changed, developed as you get closer and are going through the process.

NATHAN: Yeah. Yeah. In anticipation of it, I think that probably the biggest change for me has been I haven't had any medical role whatsoever. It's really been a mystery. And it's been a very magical thing for me to be with her stride for stride throughout this entire thing.

JASON: How does she respond knowing what your experiences are and knowing what you know—how does that—but now you are the partner?

NATHAN: That's a great question, Jason. So as I'm sure you know, the residency training process is just debilitatingly cruel with regards to how many hours you're allowed to sleep or how much time you get to pee. You're just shoveling food in your mouth all the time. And in that process of training to become an OB/GYN, you develop language about you kind of being in control of things. And so Stephanie has kind of been trained herself to understand a very different approach to the birth process, right? She gets to see it through a medical person. And it's been very—I think very challenging for her to see that as I've been—I come home. And naturally, you want to talk about your day. And your day is largely about the crazy shit that happened. And so I think it has really—it has in some ways detrimentally impacted the way that she views the process. It's, I think, instilled a fear for her that is—it's maybe—it seems like a little bit unnecessarily challenging, right? For her in some ways because I've told her about all the horror stories that can happen, right?

So there's that idea of trusting in birth that Maryn and I have talked a lot about, and I'm sure that you guys have talked a lot about. And the more you know, the less—the more you know from a medical—the way that the medical practitioners are sort of trained to

think about it the less you kind of trust in the process. So in some ways, the less you know the better, right? Which I'm now learning as a soon to be new dad, it'd be kind of nice if I didn't know so much at times because you go looking for those potential pitfalls, right? That's kind of just the nature of the beast. But she and I have been kind of work—we've had to work through that, and we're getting to a really safe and comfortable and beautiful place really where—as we're rounding home plate.

JASON: Well and plus like how the whole world is set up. It really doesn't take much of something happening to trigger that kind of primal fear that, for some reason, we've all been raised to think is normal that we carry around all the time just under the surface.

NATHAN: Sure. Sure. Sure.

JASON: So yeah. I've certainly experience that many—our first birth, Amelia. She was born in the hospital back when we were very different people. So different that at the risk of incriminating myself. The morning my daughter was born after my wife had been in labor for a long time because we ended up going to the hospital way too early because we called the wrong person. And the alarm went off kind of situation. I said, "Boy, I'm really tired. I'm going to go home and sleep, and I'll be back." And I thought that was really normal. It did not occur to me that perhaps in the wake of this amazing miracle that had just happened that was not the appropriate action. So I was very much asleep on many levels.

NATHAN: So how did you change things for you—so the first time you were aloof. You didn't really know what to do because nobody really knows what to do.

JASON: No. And we were normal people who were raised to have an emotional response to the approval of authority figures. So it's something that in school you learn to crave. And so when you get in that hospital situation, that's what's there. And those people, I'm sure, are doing the best they can in the way that they do it. But we were very happy to comply. You know what I mean? I mean these days Maryn would claw somebody's eyes out if they tried to kind of cross the line in certain things that are very special to her. But after that, I mean she is the reason—she was like, "This didn't feel right to me." Not the day after. But in the months and years after, she began kind of figuring out why that didn't feel how it was supposed to feel.

NATHAN: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

JASON: Not that you can't feel that way there. But she—we hadn't really done the work at a deep enough level to be okay with our choices. So we just kind of made whatever choice.

NATHAN: Yeah. Stephanie just said something the other day. I think she was talking to another—a girlfriend of ours who is also pregnant. And she's many months behind Stephanie. I think three or four months. But she's—it's her first pregnancy as well. And Stephanie had said—she had asked Stephanie, "Have you taken any classes or done any things?" And actually, Stephanie didn't take any classes. She has me. And she kind of feels like the one benefit here is that I can kind of just—I can kind of navigate the medical waters, and she can just enjoy being pregnant and work on the internal stuff that she knows that she's going to have to face when she's stepping through that doorway at that transition point in labor. And I think that it's turned us into a really dynamic duo. But I did hear her say something to this friend on the phone which was, "I read—I took some classes and this and that. It was really helpful because it told me that there was—it helped me understand which things I could decline in the hospital." And after that conversation, I sort of corrected her. And I said, "You know you can decline anything in the hospital."

It's kind of our job to sort of determine beforehand what we're comfortable with and what we're not. That has been a big learning lesson for me. Where we take for granted all these things. And we also take for granted that being in the hospital as the supporters of women going into labor—or a woman who is supporting her partner going into labor that you're going into this space, and you're already afraid. And you're already anxious. And it's very, very easy to just say, "This person,"—to assume that the people that are going to receive you there have your best intention at heart. And they do except that they have really been working through some of these barriers, right? Or these obstacles. And it's hard to know what exactly even to expect whenever you're not in your home environment and whenever there is sort of a procedure to do certain things. So I find that even with all of the work that we've done we still kind of run into the issues that you just described which are what are these people going to do for me. What is actually going to happen when I show up at the hospital? That's some deep work there.

JASON: Yeah. It's a big journey. And I don't think—I mean I wasn't raised to foster a really deep connection and understanding with who I really was, right? And so my decision making was done with my head often. And then maybe sometimes I would check in with my gut, but it was never the other way around. My truth would never come from within and get projected through my mouth. It never happened. And focused through the mind. So it didn't occur to me the level of deliberate and conscious acceptance of responsibility for your own self and your choices that you can accept, that you should accept, that ultimately we do have to deal with if we actually want to be alive.

NATHAN: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

JASON: So that was nowhere on my radar. Go ahead.

NATHAN: Sorry. Go ahead.

JASON: I was just going to say it leads to a very transactional kind of way through what really is a very deep and profound initiatory process even as a guy. Even though you're just there.

NATHAN: Yeah. We like to approach—so when you medicalize something like birth, it really screws things up in a way because as you and Maryn have discovered after having so many—having had this experience so many times, there's very little—the practice of engineering isn't really very easily applied to something as unpredictable as birth. And so when you walk in to this sort of situation, you try to think your way through, and that doesn't always necessarily even lead you to a better outcome which is frustrating. And especially as the support person when you want to try to find answers and fixes to a person's pain or their suffering in some way, whether that's an emotional suffering or an actual physical suffering because the baby is in the wrong position or whatever, suffering is not always a bad thing. I also want to emphasize that. When you try to apply these sort of—on a Myers-Briggs test, the thinker versus the feeler—when you try to apply those thinker principles to a space that is largely devoid of feeling and that's mostly—most medical environments, I think it gets hairy. Which is I think a great argument for a lot of people actually transitioning in their future births from the hospital to the home environment because it's really a feeling thing. And I don't know if everybody in the medical world understands what that even means, but I'm learning a lot from conversations with Stephanie about that.

JASON: Yeah. Yeah. I think that's something that—I mean I witnessed Maryn develop that—I mean it seems every human has that connection to the feeling part of the power source, right? And it's covered up or disconnected to various—to varying degrees. And so if I look back over our nine kids, it was a very peeling onion kind of styled process of really digging into the depths of that. You don't have nine kids and think it's no big deal. I didn't. Every time is like a major initiation if you develop the awareness to see it, right? And so the first time my brain was going so fast. Totally missed it. And then just slowly over time, that changed. And that was my path.

Her path was one, as far as I can tell from the outside looking in, of making a deliberate and conscious choice to cut through all of whatever conditioning she had and first connect with the trust that she has in herself, then develop that and grow that and strengthen it. And so over the course of those nine births, I have on my list here to talk about fear. But it's like the relationship with fear changed. It's like it never goes away. But you develop—at the beginning, you think—I thought—we did the Bradley classes, the ice cube on the—all that normal stuff. And so my mind told me the story, “Well, if I

just do enough of that, we're going to be prepared, and the fear would go away." Of course, it didn't. But over—but it was a nice story to tell myself.

But over all of those years, the relationship with fear changed, so that instead of being scared of it—I went from scared of it, controlled by it, knowing it was there separate from me, still scared of it, still controlled by it to ultimately being able to stand right there and look it in the face and say, "Hey, I know you're going to be here for a little while. I've got this thing to focus on."

NATHAN: So how did you get into that space, Jason? I mean that's a lot of very introspective work. And a lot of people, I think—me included—are afraid to go to places that make us afraid. So what was it that you did? Was it like a hard gym session? Was it a sauna session? Was it walks in the park? I mean how did you actually cut out—carve out that space to be so introspective with your discomfort?

JASON: Well, I had a lot of fear to deal with. So it kind of wouldn't leave me alone for most of my life. And as it relates to birth—I mean that fear—when you're carrying that around, it just needs one good excuse to just come up, and birth is a great excuse. You can be scared of it for nine months, and you're not even doing anything. And so I studied with people. I've read books. But ultimately, it was about being okay with feeling it and just over—slowly developing that separation. It's not you. You're making it, but it's not you. So it's like if you were acting in a movie but realized—but you could also be aware that you were acting in a movie. And so it doesn't change what's happening. It changes your relationship to what's happening, and you can say, "I don't need to make this go away because actually it's part of who I am. It's probably not going to go away." And so you just—I guess I would call it a radical acceptance of what is.

NATHAN: Wow. So it almost sounds like you were able to disassociate from the ego. The ego is that source of fear. So when you were able to separate yourself from the fear, I mean you were separating yourself from Jason.

JASON: Yeah. Well, my story of Jason. I was actually feeling the real Jason probably for the first time.

NATHAN: That's a good point. So your consciousness is separate from the fear. There is just this something that's driving the vessel. Yeah.

JASON: Yeah. So I mean it started as just a choice. I was like—I just have a saying, "Do nothing out of fear."

NATHAN: Right.

JASON: I have no reason to say that. I have no studies. I have not—I just said this is how it's going to be. And then it was slowly training myself and then realizing that if I did it right once and didn't die maybe I wasn't going to die. And so I could just keep kind of chipping away at—I mean that's such a controlling—when I hear the stories of guys telling their partner you shouldn't do this because I don't feel good about it. I may have said that early on. But we're so far down the rabbit hole, and it's cool to be in that position that I can look back and say that is crazy.

NATHAN: You're right. You're right. Yeah.

JASON: Then we should work on it. I mean I have as much work to do as anybody else.

NATHAN: I have this—I have a theory. I don't know if Maryn told you. But I'm actually going to be stepping away from OB/GYN altogether.

JASON: Okay.

NATHAN: For awhile. I don't know when I'll go back. But I'm so happy with end of care life palliative medicine that—and there's some other stuff that happened. But contract related stuff. So but anyways, I have this theory, and I think part of the reason I've been sort of asking for the Universe for some out has been related to the fear that I sense in most hospital based birth workers. And I say that general category because I'm including doctors, anesthesiologists, CRNAs, nurse practitioners, PAs, midwives that work in the hospital, whatever, CNMs. I think that a lot of what we do is driven by fear, right? A lot of what we do in general—our general—the way we live our life is driven by fear. It's why we vote for different politicians. It's why we treat people certain ways, why we give people kind of—we cross the street when we see people across the road. And the same goes for this programmed—this limbic response to things that make us afraid.

But it makes us act—I don't want to say irrationally. But it makes us act in ways that potentially even lead us towards the pothole. And so the analogy of the interventionist in the hospital, the doctor that's doing things to try to help, whenever those doing things come from a place of their own fear, it doesn't necessarily lead to a better outcome, right? It's not necessarily the best way for us to be making decisions, but there's a fear that you're going to be sued. There's a fear that something bad is going to happen to the mom or baby based on that one in a million thing that happened to them once 20 years ago. And I think the same goes for a dad or a partner, who is supporting their loved—their one and only in labor when they're watching them go through a place of pain which we associate with death and with all this trauma and bad things, right? But that's not necessarily the case, I'm guessing, when you're then attending to Maryn's needs in future pregnancies and births. Am I correct?

JASON: Yeah. At some point along the way, I realized through work and learning from others and whatever, I learned that we all have a tremendous power to create, right? And what we're—a large part of what we're creating is based on the energy that we're emitting. And there's nothing worth—there's really nothing in our control in this world except for that. So I knew and had proved to my—proven to myself enough that what I send out is what I create, so the least I could do in this situation is work through my stuff so that I'm not actively creating something based on that vibration of being scared to death, right? So kind of a big responsibility because nobody—who teaches people to be a man? I didn't have any—nobody teaches us that. What does that mean?

NATHAN: Oh man. That's a whole separate podcast episode.

JASON: It is. But that's what they need. That's what they need when they're in that position. And my best definition for what it means to be a man is to develop the emotional maturity to stand as a silent witness to that immense power. You just take it in. So the first birth I was at clueless. The second home birth—the first home birth, our second birth, I tried to learn everything to do right. I almost scalded my child to death because the midwife said, "Make the water as hot as possible." And so I was running down the sidewalk to get bags of ice because the water was ridiculously hot.

NATHAN: It's like boiling.

JASON: But I was trying to do everything right. And that went on probably for another birth or two. And then I realized that me doing anything is the wrong approach. And so over these last couple births, I'm really—I don't even—I'm not even in the room. I feel that my energy is interrupting a process that has nothing to do with me at the moment. That's just me.

NATHAN: Yes. Yes. That brings two things to my mind, if I can just share. One of them relates to the difference in masculine and feminine energy. And I don't mean male, female.

JASON: Yeah. I get it.

NATHAN: I mean genuinely. And I hope that people listening understand that too. Because I know that you intrinsically understand that. It took me some time to learn that. And I even—we—I even asked my wife recently, "Do you think—how do you think you're split up masculine feminine energy?" And in order to qualify what that means, the masculine energy is like a boat. And the boat is trying to get to that beacon in the distance. And the feminine energy is the water that allows that boat to be carried to that beacon. And she was like, "I think I'm probably 60% feminine 40% masculine." And I said, "I'm probably exactly the opposite." But what you're talking about is a very critically—it's very critically lacking in the way that we view the birth and death process.

And the reason I mention birth and death is that there's this moment at—there are moments throughout our lives and especially in these very critical human experiences like birth and death in which there is absolutely nothing that the masculine energy contributes.

And what I mean by that is that the masculine energy is the fixer. It is the shaper of things. It is the trying to get the square peg to fit into the round hole. And by golly, we're going to make it work. That is an important feature in our whole—the sort of astral—the cosmos. There is this something that has to make things work. But then there's also the feminine energy, which is the feeling out of what is needed as opposed to how can I make this thing work. And that feeling out of what is needed sometimes manifests in the best ways as just holding space and being present with somebody. And I think one thing that a lot of men in—and, of course, me being a doctor all that I get to see all day long is people suffering and then different manifestations of masculine and feminine energy trying to meet those needs.

But the masculine energy often manifests as, “Well, let's try to fix it. Let's do this. Oh, you're uncomfortable? Let's do it this way. Let's do it this way, this way.” Versus the feminine energy simply holding space and bearing witness to the fact that there's some suffering here, and that suffering is not necessarily your thing to fix. It's there for you to bear witness and just to be with. And sometimes that's therapy in and of itself. And I don't mean therapy like it's going to make it better. I mean therapy in this person that you want to support so badly in labor, in pain, doesn't need you to fix it. They need you to be there with it. Is that kind of—

JASON: That is support. That is—yeah. I mean I remember years ago when I first read *Way of the Superior Man* by David Deida.

NATHAN: Dude, that's exactly what I was thinking about with the boat metaphor.

JASON: Yeah. And I read that, and I was like, “Man, I really am stupid.” I mean you see clues like in a relationship. Masculine and feminine. Again, it doesn't matter if you're a man or woman. But how many times does the feminine emotional wave break the windows, and the masculine is like, “Well, I know how we can figure this out.” And the way that they look at you like you're stupid because you are trying to interject that energy into a wave that just has to be expressed.

NATHAN: Right. Right.

JASON: So that was super eye opening.

NATHAN: Yeah. I mean that guy—his book—my friend, Hamilton and I, we pass book titles like that around a lot. And the book title is terrible. I will say. They probably

should have named it something else because it sounds like a misogynistic something. Like manifesto or something. But it's really about exactly what you and I are just—are talking about. And my wife and I have been together since we were 15.

JASON: Wow.

NATHAN: And that's almost half of our lives. So I'm 35 now. We are a—we are almost half way there. And we were only apart for a short period of time when she and I split up when I went to medical school, and that was like a very big change in our lives. We grew apart. Completely exclusively. We were with other people. And then the stars aligned, and we ended up back together. So it wasn't like, "Let's take a little break." So we have a very strange, kind of Nicholas Sparks style story. But the reason I bring all that up is that despite all of those years, there are still times when my wife comes to me and has a problem, and I am—my first—my instinct is to try to fix it. And that is not what she's coming to me for. And I—this sounds like a silly, kind of cliché thing. But that is the difference that is the push and pull of masculine and feminine energy. The yin and yang of this world, of this universe where right now at this moment we need more feminine energy. And you're bringing masculine energy to the party, and it's just not what's needed.

And then we're like, "Well, why did you tell me? Why'd you tell me about your problem if you don't want me—don't want my advice, whatever?" And I have—I've had to get over that. I've had to really work through that realizing that me coming to the rescue is really not what my wife, who is an ultra powerful feminine energy—ball of energy. It's really not what she needs. And in labor, that's going to be a huge lesson for me, and it should be for any man who is going to be supporting anybody who's—I shouldn't say man. But any person—support person who is masculine energy dominant supporting a person who is feminine energy dominant, if that makes sense. I hope that that makes sense.

JASON: Well, and just to help people think through this if they've not heard this before. I think you can even break it down a little more between masculine energy and directive—the directive principle, right? So I'm going to fix it. I know which way to go. That's directive principle. That's what the masculine energy does in part. The other thing the masculine energy does is has the capacity to stand silent in a storm. And that's the support that you were just describing earlier, right? And so the education, learning curve, seems to be when to use what which is why so many times you'll hear—I'm going to say women. But it could be a feminine energy wondering why the partner, the masculine energy, doesn't know what he wants. Doesn't know what he wants to do with his life. Because the feminine is looking for a directive principle like those things go together, right? Magnetic and electric. And so if you want to exhibit masculinity, get your shit together and figure out what you're doing.

NATHAN: Yeah. I mean I actually forgot about that principle. But that's—right. And as men are raised because men are raised with—our role models are really like Russell Crowe in *Gladiator*. You're the hero going through the hero's journey, and you need to know what you want. And you need to go out, and you got to get it, Jason. And if you don't, then you're really not living up to the code that is man. But it's not—what isn't modeled for us is the support and the cradling of the masculine energy by the feminine energy and why that's so important.

JASON: Well, and I think so much of that is characterize on purpose to—the powers that be don't want strong men.

NATHAN: Right.

JASON: They want scared men, who can be manipulated and who will comply. So a whole male is not in the best interest of anybody who is currently running this situation.

NATHAN: Well, a whole male is only attractive to a whole female. And my wife and I—our last trip back to Black Rock City in Nevada for Burning Man—we went to this emotithon event. And I don't know if I told you—you or Maryn about this, but it was basically a tent. And there were about—I want to say about 40 people maybe. No. There were about 60 people. There was a lot. There were 30 men and 30 women. And the whole event was that they're only going to let a limited number of people in. And it was early in the morning. It was three hours long which is a lot of time at Burning Man when there is stimulus everywhere. But the men and the women were separated. And the men were kind of revved up through the—you remember the Haka? It's like a dance from New Zealand or from the Polynesian Islands.

JASON: Mm-hmm. Yeah.

NATHAN: They do it at weddings. The Haka has a lot of symbolism in—about having tender heart and fierce balls. Sorry. Yes. Tender heart, fierce balls.

JASON: Yes.

NATHAN: I want to make sure I (inaudible).

JASON: Get it backwards?

NATHAN: Yeah. Very different.

JASON: That would be different.

NATHAN: A very different dance. Yeah. But this is the Haka. It's like the big, wide eyes, loud chest pounding, and they do it—the New Zealand Blacks do it before rugby matches at Middle Field and—or Center Field. And we learned a little bit about the

symbology, and we did a couple of the movements. And a lot of us actually started crying because it was an opportunity for men to just be strong but also be vulnerable. And after we were revved up and the women were warmed up in their own way, we then entered the tent. And the men for three hours were directed to just hold space for a woman emoting what she's upset about. And it could be a woman who has been molested by her grandfather or who was raped or was—her father was an alcoholic and left the family or just missing their husband who passed away or whatever it is and left them feeling empty. And it was a challenge because you have to be a very strong man to stand there and maybe even be slapped or pushed or punched while a woman is allowed to emote and express their feelings and their problems while you stand there and simply support them by holding space and being present with them and acknowledging their fear, their pain, their suffering.

And in the room, I will say, for three hours, there was not a dry eye in the room. And it ultimately was a growth experience for both the men and the women. The men were actually raised up in the eyes of the women but also for themselves spiritually, emotionally, psychologically because you actually are supported by the feminine energy. And a lot of women—a couple women actually very specifically said, “We want to be—we want to be healed by the masculine energy. We want to be one with the masculine energy.” Again, yin and yang. But we can't if we're afraid of you. And that toxic masculinity which says just the one part which is hoorah, we're just going to conquer the world is not enough. That's not enough to be a man.

And when you're in labor, that attitude really—I've seen it only as a bystander of other men. But when men aren't prepared maybe to be in the place of suffering and holding space for that suffering—and, again, suffering is not a bad thing. I'm only using that word because I don't have the lexicon to describe it otherwise. But if you can be with that suffering and that pain, you guys can actually become one. And that's my hopes that my wife and I are going to be able to achieve when we're in that space.

JASON: Yeah. Well, I mean what you're describing is a lesson it took me a long time to be able to be in the presence of something over which I had zero control and not be affected by it, right? Because the healing force that you're describing is that. If I react to it, if I let my programs run based on what I'm seeing or try to—screws everything up. And the other thing I was going to say is—if I can remember what I was going to say. Is that the stories that we've been conditioned—the words that we've been conditioned to put to these events are creative in their own way, right? So we've been taught to think about, like you said, suffering or pain or whatever that's what we're taught that is. And when I've had the luxury of seeing that enough times that after awhile you begin to realize that's not what it is. You are witnessing an expression of power that no man on this planet has ever displayed nor will. And when—if it's possible to flip that around then all of a sudden everything—then it's different.

NATHAN: Right. That makes perfect sense.

JASON: It is like, “Holy shit. Look at what she is doing. This is the real her.” And so that’s very different than, “What can I do for you? Your back hurts so,”—totally—that’s contracting. You can feel the energy pull in.

NATHAN: Right. Yeah. Tom York was one of Maryn’s clients.

JASON: Tom Knolls.

NATHAN: Yeah. Tom Knolls. Yeah. Yeah. So he had said something that I had been thinking for years through residency. And this might just be that I have a little bit more feminine energy than other men. There’s going to be men out there that have 90% and 1% feminine. And that’s cool. We need that too. That’s valuable in other ways. But I learn more from men that have a lot more feminine energy. And Tom Knolls has a lot of feminine energy and is able to see through the lines a little bit and see that hey, this—he verbalized something about this feminine power—what women are talking about—what women want to be appreciated for is what you just described. There is a whole other world there of where women—of what women contribute that is not valued in our society. And when you’re in that moment of labor, you get to see it in its raw existence. It’s in your face, and there’s nothing you can do to touch it. It’s what women were worshipped for in the past.

And, unfortunately, we aren’t there right now in our society. And we probably need the pendulum to swing more in that direction in order for us to fix things. But our need as masculine dominant people to fix things, it has a—it hits brick wall, right? When you get to these places where there’s nothing here to fix. This is just—this is your raw feminine energy rearing its head and screaming out to the gods.

JASON: Well, I mean that’s suppressed because it’s uncontrollable.

NATHAN: You’re right.

JASON: It is the only force of creation here. And you can’t put it back in a bottle once it’s out. And it’s amazing to watch a woman, as I’ve been able to do over the years—I mean women have to deal with so much shit. They’re told how to be, what to think, what they can have, what they can do, where they can—it’s ridiculous. And the worst part about it is some of them actually take it on and then realize that they’re not actually living yet.

NATHAN: Right. Right.

JASON: And so I got to see a woman that, to some degree, was conditioned that way early in her life. And over the years, that changed. It’s gone. And that’s a pretty cool

thing to witness because she does it naturally, and I have—but then that motivates me to work to get myself to catch up.

NATHAN: Right. Right. Right. Yeah. I mean amen. Yeah. We need women to be revered for what they're capable of doing. Not even so many hundreds or thousands of years ago women—there aren't many matriarchal societies that have been (inaudible). But even back to Sumer, there's this book I read, *Woman as Healer*. And I was like holy shit. There is a lot of history here of women being worshipped for what they're capable of doing. And what we've done now a couple thousand years later is that we've gone as far as prescribing birth control pills to everybody to disconnect women from their most basic hormonal physiology. And we don't think anything of it. We just think, "Oh, you're having a period. Well, let's just disconnect you from that, so you can be more productive in a masculine world." And a lot of women don't feel like that is deep down in touch with who they are, what they want to be. But we've now—because we only value those traits of divide and conquer, we've missed out on this feminine energy that is so valuable because—and it's—you're right. It's easy just to like, "Let's just cut ourselves away from that because we can't control it. And let's try to level the playing field in some way."

It's not a very popular argument, but people are always trying to say men and women are equal. They are not equal. Women can do things far superior than what men can do, but we don't like recognizing that because that's scary. And we don't have any touch—we can't touch it. We can't control it. And I mean I could go on and on for this for—about this for hours. This is something—

JASON: I mean I think one way—to anybody listening who—I mean you could be anywhere on your journey. You could think what we're saying is crazy. Or you could be standing up and resonating with it. Whatever. But one thing that I've come to feel is that I can't think of a better place than birth—there is no bigger opportunity to be a man than that.

NATHAN: Hell yeah.

JASON: I mean it doesn't matter what kind of money you make or what you do for—none of that matters. That's the chance that you get at that moment to really show the world. And the funny part is you show them and the people you care about really by doing nothing, right? It's actually when you don't have your shit together that you're the one running around fidgeting nervous, kind of projecting all of your unresolved stuff on a process that doesn't need that.

NATHAN: Right. Right.

JASON: And actually having it together looks the opposite. And it's a great opportunity.

NATHAN: Yeah. This is where men can be men. And I guess society has kind of taught us the opposite, right? You're supposed to step back and be stoic or whatever. That word stoic is just something to hide behind. If you really—if you're a man, you can support women being women. You can support the feminine—being feminine without having to shape it. To meet whatever standard society has put on women today. And I don't mean the feminine. I mean women. So for people that are feminine energy dominant, this is our opportunity to be masculine energy dominant males and really show that we can support them.

JASON: I used to work with a shaman who always went on and on about how people would be afraid of their own power. And my mind never could wrap my—I was like that's—that doesn't even make sense. But that's what the world is trained to do. The minute we get close to real power we shut off, or there is an excuse. Or it's not the right time, or we're not ready. Or it's not safe. It's too risky. We have limitless amount of defense mechanisms.

NATHAN: I think a really interesting metaphor is—you remember when you were a kid, and you were like out in the woods. And there was a hill. And you and your friend are going to race down the hill. You would run down that hill with reckless abandon, and you would feel like you were going to fly. And nowadays, we take it easy because we're worried about our knees and our back and everything else. But that's exactly what that made me feel right there. Is that you get that sense that you could run as fast as your feet can carry you and you can take off into the sky. And I guess that kind of gets sort of—cliché but kind of gets beat out of you over time.

JASON: Yeah. Well, and I think the trick is that everything that most men say they want is on the other side of being able to do this.

NATHAN: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

JASON: And I spent years—like mine trying to figure out another way to get all those things. Respect, success. All those things that we're taught that we want. Those are byproducts of being able to do something like this.

NATHAN: Yeah. Yeah. It's a spiritual journey. Whenever people ask you, "How are you doing? Oh, enjoy your final nights out or whatever while you can. Go to the movies or whatever," I'm like, "You guys have no idea the types of dreams and the types of weird things that are going through my head." And I say weird only because I don't really have any way of talking about it. It's—yeah. It's ineffable. It's a—this is where it's at. I am excited for this. This is a—this is my final test of this chapter in my life. And I look forward to doing it again and again and again and seeing what happens. I mean this is what life is all about. This is a big, giant, final exam, and I've trained my mind, body, my emotions, my spiritual manifestations of whatever has come out and different

experiences I've had. This is it. This is where it's all led to. Am I ready? And hell, yeah. I'm ready. This is the love of my life, and I'm here to be with her and to be a witness to her. And I'm excited.

JASON: Yeah. You have time for two more questions?

NATHAN: Oh my god. Of course.

JASON: Okay. Number one, what are you most excited about? And number two, what do you feel that you have learned most through this process? What's the most valuable thing that you've learned?

NATHAN: I've learned to—so what am I most excited about? I'm most excited to see how Stephanie experiences this process for the first time because I think that she's working through far more than I have been. I think that this is a final test for her in very different ways, of course. She has witnessed birth. Her sister had two unmedicated, no intervention births at a birth center. About nine years ago was her first. And so it's been a little while. But she was there for that, and that was her first births. So I'm very excited to see how she grows through this and how we as a couple grow through this. Somebody gave me really good advice. I think it was Augustine Colebrook. She had said everybody focuses on the day of the birth. And they fail to remember that you have to then live beyond that one day of birth. And so she and I have become extremely—I mean if we were close before, we're like glue now. And I'm really excited about where that's leading us. So that's the most excited thing. What was the second question? Or was that the second question?

JASON: Just what you've learned or discovered most in this process going through it for yourself.

NATHAN: I've learned it's not about me. I think far too often TV shows and our friends and everybody else they talk about the changes that are going to happen in your life. And it's not about me. My wife and I have had to learn that she and I are stepping through a portal together hand in hand, and we're going to become something else. Something new. And it's not something to lament. We're excited for whatever change comes next because, for us, that's what life is all about is we're going to grow together. And if I pick—she always uses the analogy, if you pick up—if you learn that you love death metal, I have to love you through your new obsession with death metal. *Tool* is one of my favorite bands. They're not death metal, but we're going to see them in Nashville together next week. But it's that type of thing that we all thing that you have to just be this person that you married—that your partner married, and then you're going to be like this forever. And you're going to have to find ways to be excitable. No. It's just that's not reality.

We are going to change. Our life is going to get a little more tiresome, a little crankier at times, and we're going to have a new person now that's relying on us. But that's also something to be excited about. I don't know why that's something that is—it's constantly dreaded. And people are like, "Well, get used to it." It's like well what is our life now? We watch TV at night. We eat together. We have a lot of friends. But is this it? Are we not going to grow as people anymore? And I feel like going through this process is not an escape from that because we love our life. And we are lamenting losing it. But we're also learning that hey, this is going to be an exciting adventure. What a cool thing that we get to go through together. And it's amazing that we love each other so much and that we've been so closely connected since we were teenagers. And now we get to make this—take this giant leap together into the future.

JASON: Yeah.

NATHAN: It's awesome, Jason. I'm so excited.

JASON: That's awesome. Yeah.

NATHAN: Yeah. We're going to have to play catch up to you guys now.

JASON: It's not a race. Well, that's cool. Have we—did we cover everything? Or is there anything you want to talk about?

NATHAN: Well, I'd like to know from you what are three insider tricks for going into labor.

JASON: Going into labor.

NATHAN: Yeah. I mean how can I support her through this journey? Apart from the things we've talked about. Is there any little tricks? Like soda water tastes good at 2:00 in the morning? Or—

JASON: No. It is just rolling with the wave. I mean even with the same person over and over they're all so different. It's like she is growing in real time. I guess I would say the process of watching that happen shows you the bare foundation of who someone has become. And so the same woman but it's been nine different women.

NATHAN: Right.

JASON: And so just staying present enough to really take that in, if I had it to do over, that is something I would do even more because it's gone. I mean you can get a video. You can—it's not the same.

NATHAN: Right. Right.

JASON: So it's like just keeping your mind now. Because like you said, there's ultimately not much—there's nothing for us to do. We're not going to make it better because it doesn't have to be made better. And so we can just be. And we're not practiced in doing that. And for some people, if you don't do that, it feels really weird. There's an enormous amount of space that you have to develop the ability to just let exist.

NATHAN: Just the art of doing nothing. Just observe the space.

JASON: But it's very active, right? Because it's not doing nothing even though that's what it—that's what they call it. It's actually being more alive probably than you've ever been. So that's what I'd recommend to anybody because it's so many magical moments that we're trained especially as guys to be so outcome based. It's like if the outcome of the journey is good that's what we remember.

NATHAN: Right.

JASON: But then we miss the journey. So it's like to somehow shortcut that in your brain and just—I mean you're literally sitting in a car that you're not driving and, hopefully, you remember to look out the window and say, “Wow. This is fucking magical.”

NATHAN: Yeah. You have such a healthy—

JASON: Sorry. That was only one tip. But that's all I've got.

NATHAN: But that's an amazing—thank you for that. That's such an amazing perspective that is so refreshing and so needed by people like me, who constantly hear that the downsides or, “Well, get sleep while you can,” those little sitcom response. But I have to tell you I am genuinely excited about us going into labor. It's going to be a hard journey. But hard only in the superficial ways. It's an immense opportunity for growth and for some real development as a couple bringing this new soul into the world, and we're very much looking forward to it.

JASON: Yeah. That's awesome. Well, I wish you the best for sure.

NATHAN: Thank you. Thank you.

JASON: And all right. Can you tell people where they can learn more about you, follow you, see what you're up to?

NATHAN: Yeah. I've simplified my life recently. I need more time for me and lady and baby and puppy. And so no more social media. I'm on Facebook, but it's—don't even bother looking me up. I don't even remember my password, but I'm on there. As long as I don't log out of my Internet browser, I think I will be able to continue to use

Facebook. But the website—I changed the website address. It's obgynowino.com. O B G Y N O W I N O.com. And I have a podcast. It's the OB Gyno Wino podcast. It's got ACOG reviews and some microdoses of just personal anecdotes about pregnancy and about medicine and about life. And I'm going to continue doing that as long as I can hold a microphone.

JASON: Awesome. That's great. And if anybody listening out there has any questions or anything, I'm certainly happy to answer them or give my two cents at Jason@indiebirth.org so feel free to reach out. All right. Well, thank you very much. Yeah. This was awesome. Good luck.

NATHAN: My pleasure.

(closing music)