

(introductory music)

DISCLAIMER: 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.

(music)

MARYN: This podcast series on mothering is about my role as mother whether that is sharing about how I raise my nine children with my husband or in sharing the challenges or in pondering the bigger picture like how birth might influence our ability to mother. I created this podcast to share my heart with you and to inspire community and support around raising kids consciously with love and to remind you that the true wisdom of mothering can be found within.

Greeting, community of women. Happy March. I can't believe it's March already. Oh my goodness. I have not podcasted in awhile. And I don't know that I have great reasons for that except I've been on kind of a break from births. And that's felt just really good. And for those of you that don't know what that's like, it's so lovely to attend births, but then the break is just as sweet. And your life really takes on a different quality I've found. And so I've really been trying to embrace that. And by that, I mean turning my phone off at night and getting a lot more outside time and time with the kids and extra hikes with my husband and all kinds of things that when you're on call you sometimes feel like you just don't have time for it all. And you don't want to use up all your energy doing stuff in the event someone calls. So I guess that's what I've been doing the last month, if anyone has been wondering. But I'm really excited today to continue this mothering series.

And this will be number three. As I said when I began this little miniseries, I don't know how long it will last. If people seem to be enjoying it still and things come to my mind and maybe things come to your mind that could be discussed here, then let me know. And otherwise, I guess it'll just run its course. But if you haven't checked out the other two mothering episodes, they're around on whatever podcast you listen to. You can always find the huge library that we have at indiebirth.org/podcastarchive. People ask all the time where they can find this episode or that episode. And at, I think, 150 total episodes now the podcast apps don't keep them all. So pretty sure iTunes doesn't. I mean I guess there's only so much storage out there in the cloud, right? So if you are

new and you want to see the full spectrum from the very first episode I ever did about seven years ago, then go to that archive page. You'll find everything there. And yeah. I feel like the last few have been potent, at least that's the feedback I've received. So if you're looking for something to listen to and, again, you're new or maybe you missed some of our last episodes, I did one on money not long ago. That seems to have sparked some really positive conversation in our community. And my husband did one not long ago with another guy. And that also has gotten really amazing feedback. So much so that he's slated some other men to have chats with that we'll be releasing here. Just such a really fantastic part of the conversation. And one that I don't think I could have as a woman. The guys really need to have that together. And so go take a listen to that, if you haven't.

So Indie Birth land, we are thriving on a new platform. And I'll keep this brief for those of you that are looking to get to the meat of this podcast. But it's always fun to kind of give an update. You can skip it, if you want. indiebirth. No. No. No. I said it wrong. social.indiebirth.org. So social.indiebirth.org is our new platform to have community. And you should just check it out if you want to. Make a profile if you want to. Join the hundreds of people there already that have migrated from what we have considered kind of the icky social media platforms like Facebook. Not going to blab on about that. But most of you know that we kind of left those platforms. Instagram, for sure. And there's still some stuff, I guess, going on on Facebook. I'm personally not on either of them. And I really just can't stand them.

So when Margo came across this other thing—and it's actually called Mighty Networks. Yeah. We really, really liked it. And even if you just take a look, it looks really nice. Our logo. And just the way it's laid out I think is really intuitive for the most part. Pretty easy. People can do the same things they do on Facebook. But it's our platform. So there is no—what's the word I'm trying to say? There's not going to be anybody telling you that your birth photo is nudity. Let's put it that way. There's not going to be anybody saying that that goes against community guidelines. We'll decide that. But there is not a big brother doing that. And there are no ads. And yeah. I mean it is still the Internet. So I guess be forewarned. The Internet is the Internet. I always say don't post anything there that you wouldn't want on a billboard. It's still public, for the most part. But it is our community as far as we can tell. People that we've known for years, people on our classes and our courses, and so, as you might imagine, there's just great conversation and kind of a common ground, common understanding of how the Indie Birth community handles things. What kind of perspective we have. And so we always invite new people in there.

And if you're in any of our private groups, maybe you're in the school or whatever, then you'll have the private groups there. But the public network is free. So don't be fooled. Don't think it costs anything. You can just come on over there and be part of the

network and post and check out all the posts. So so far, so good. It's still social media, for the most part. It just happens to be kind of our platform. So I guess the same risks to social media still apply. Like you don't want to spend all day on there. But I don't know. I don't think anybody is really doing that at this point because it's pretty birth focused, as you might imagine.

So thanks for allowing me to sip some tea here. It is pretty much spring in northern Arizona. The birds are chirping. You might hear it if the microphone picks it up outside. And yeah. Life is good. Life is really good. And all of the kids are doing super well. And spring is beautiful here. We're outside pretty much all year although summer is the time when we spend more time indoors probably. So yeah. The kids are thriving in their outside world. Scootering and biking. And we just had the Sedona mountain bike festival just yesterday and the day before. And we all go to that. We all hang out. It's so awesome and fun. And it's just so great to live in a place where people really value using their bodies and being outside and breathing fresh air and having sunshine and being athletic. We really appreciate that about this place. Certainly not like that everywhere we've lived. And I find that to be a downer. So super pumped that spring is here. Not always as pumped about the summer that comes after that, but oh well. We'll make it through.

Okay. Well, that was a solid eight minutes of me blabbing, if you were wondering. And today I don't know how long this will really be. But I wanted to talk a little bit about rites of passage. When I said this to my husband this morning, he was like, "Your rites of passage?" And I said, "No." I mean yeah. There are rites of passage as a mother. And I guess the answer actually isn't no because as our children go through these changes, these transitions—I'm calling them rites of passage—then certainly sure. As mothers, we do too. We experience feelings. And we learn lessons. And I'm sure partners do too. But I was going to focus more on—yeah. The kind of transitions that I've noticed over the years in sort of the spectrum of ages that we have. And just talk more about that. More about what I think and what I feel and, as always, this is for you to just weigh against your own thoughts and feelings. And if you have older children, I don't think any of these things will be surprising. If you don't, you have maybe really little kids then maybe it will be cool that you haven't been through any of these yet or many of them. I'm sure you have—you will—you have been through some, if you have a baby even. But some of the other ones like losing teeth. It's a really fun thing to think about. And if you're not at that point, then cool. You have even more time to put your intention into these transitions that your child or children will go through.

So rites of passage is kind of a mouthful. I might swap it out with transition or whatever as we go. But certainly in life, there are so many rites of passage. And specifically to women, I think we all know what those are. In fact, I have another podcast way back there in the archives—dig, dig, dig—about the sacred blood mysteries. And that's a

really fun one to listen to, if you haven't. Talking about the rites of passage as a woman. And specifically what those are. So it's not a new phrase. And birth is certainly one of the rites of passage. My friend, Diane who is a really awesome elder midwife, was here this weekend. And she taught our group. Our—the students and myself. And I always learn so much from her. And she goes off on a million tangents, and it's amazing and wonderful. And she kind of ended the day by saying, "You know, I'm not one of those midwives that think birth is the best, the only rite of passage. It's just one." And so I thought that was really appropriate. Yeah. There are so many.

And so what if we consider all of the changes, especially a child, goes through. And really, I can't go through all of them. So let's talk about the major ones. So first of all, so many of these transitions, and really every one if you wanted to and you felt this way, could be seen and felt as sacred. Just that there's change. So having respect for the transitions, I think, is a key component of what I would love to impart today and what I'm constantly reminding myself for sure. The first few times I was through some of these things with my—what are now my oldest children—I don't know how respectful I was because I was just kind of winging it. First time mom. Just going with it. But now I've had this honor and privilege of seeing them so many times that I think I do have a pretty deep respect for this sacred aspect even around the changes that are considered so ordinary and normal in our culture like losing teeth or toilet training.

These aren't necessarily even seen as rites of passage. They're just developmental milestones, which is a really boring way of describing something so cool. And then, of course, there's the flip side of that especially newer parents get really caught up often, not always—often in those developmental milestones but not from this emotional point of view, spiritual point of view. This purely physical. Like why is my kid not doing the thing? Why are they not crawling? Why are they not walking? Maybe they need this. Maybe they need that. Maybe they need physical therapy. Yeah. I mean who knows, right? Sometimes our children do need things and more support. But it's our job as parents to, I think, figure that out from a very conscious place. Not a fearful place. So much like birth. So do we want to do things just because we're scared? Our kids aren't meeting this weird chart that a pediatrician has on their wall. Or are we really with them through these transitions? And can we really feel even in the case of struggle why our child might be struggling?

I have shared Rune's birth story before. It's in our book. *Indie Birth: A Story of Radical Birth Love*, which is now on Amazon, by the way. And I mean I've shared it other places. I think it's on our blog, and people have heard me talk about it on the podcast. So he's 11 now. And he was a homebirth transport right after birth. He didn't transition, funny enough, quickly enough for the midwife that I had attending. And that was really traumatic. And sure. Of course, there are babies that do need help, and we don't want to ignore that. But what I've seen in my son, Rune, over the 11 years of his life is that

transitions are never easy for him. He's the smartest kid you'll ever meet. And sweet and kind and all of the things. But he struggles when things change. And he struggles when—I don't know. The next level is there for him to meet. So that was apparent at birth for him. And so I think he's taught me a lot about sensitivity around this issue. And, again, really consulting my mama gut at various points in his life to say, "Do we need something else here? Do we need more support? Or is this just him? Should I just be patient with him?"

And in the case—in his case, it's just that. That I needed to have more respect and more patience for the speed at which he sometimes does things. And, again, change, transition, is a huge thing. So this idea of rites of passage frames it differently just with that phrase because otherwise I think there is so much pressure for parents, for mothers, around kids meeting milestones. And, of course, I'm speaking probably about younger children, like I said. More developmental sort of things. Talking, walking, that kind of thing. But that continues. The transitions continue into teenagerhood and probably even into adulthood. But we're going to stick with kids today. So lots of pressure. Lots of expectations. Our parents may have expected things of us that we read at this time, and that's weird, if you don't read at that time. My own mother, who I love dearly but who has a completely different perspective on these things and schooling, is definitely one. Made some comment not long ago about one of my children and why they couldn't read yet. Well, they're not ready. Why would they read before they're ready? Because of the expectation that you read at this age. You learn that in this grade. Yeah. Another reason that school is not part of our make up at a deep level I don't think. But you can listen to the schooling podcast for more on that.

So yeah. Just communicating this pressure. The expectations. And just encouraging us all to sit with those feelings. I could blab on a lot about how that might feel. And I am not immune to those feelings. I mean I probably am more now having parented for almost 18 years. But I remember very clearly in the beginning feeling that pressure, again, from my parents, from family, from the world, from what you can Google, from the books, from the pediatrician, if you're seeing one. There's a lot of pressure on children to do things at a certain time. And yeah. Just not a lot of compassion and patience. We're all so afraid something is either wrong which, again, what if there is something wrong? That's different. But what if there's not? What if that's just the unique variation of this child? Just as we see this in birth. And the transition to breathing, of course. As I brought up with Rune—and I have a podcast on that as well just like this—the spiritual ramifications of transition. So we all made that very first transition. We were probably all rushed and pressured through that transition. And so it's literally in our DNA that we don't have patience for other humans to do things on their own timeframe.

There's a lot of this is how you do it around it rites of passage for children. So this happens at a certain age. You toilet train at this age. And if you get to be this age, then that's weird or wrong, or there's something this child is—whatever. Pick your word, right? They're defiant. Or we make up our stories and our labels as to why they are not meeting our expectations of timeline. So that's a lot of the feelings that are culturally out there, as you may know, around transitions. And then there's kind of the opposite too. Like no attention. Like nobody notices that this kid just went through a big thing. So it can kind of go both ways. And as I offered, I think it's a great thing to just sit with with your kids or your child and just consider what's presenting in their lives right now or even kind of what's up the pike and what your own thoughts, feelings, beliefs, experiences have been around that. And, of course, most of us—we really only have how we were treated as children. So that's really all we have when we start out parenting, and it's a very deliberate and conscious effort to look at that honestly and either reprogram or go with it and say, "Yeah. That was awesome." Parents all are doing the best they can, and I do firmly believe that. I really don't have any other way that I think it should have been for my parents to parent me. And I think that's part of the healing that we all go through too. And the continued healing because no parent is perfect. Not me, not you, no one. And so we will make mistakes and that. But we can try to be as conscious as possible, and I think this is a great area to be conscious.

So there's so many ages, so many rites of passage to talk about. Yeah. Where do I want to start? Hmm. Well, I guess we'll start with babyhood and just talk about a few of them just to kind of like point out the obvious. Again, I want to honor the fact that as a child is going through a transition that we are too as the mother. Both parents are, and the siblings are. It can also affect everyone. It just kind of changes the dynamic, right? Like when a baby grows up. It changes the whole family. And when a teenager—and this hasn't happened yet in our house. When a teenager is ready to leave the house, that will change the whole family. So, again, I think our culture really misses the mark. We just kind of gloss over these things, or we over emphasize how we think they need to go. We miss the maybe spiritual significance or just emotional significance. And often—and I think I kind of said this. There's some kind of weird story that we've overlaid onto it. And, again, I really think that comes from most of our own childhoods and the way we were taught things should go. And, again, that's been perpetuated because people aren't kind of healing their children selves. And that's actually another huge theme and probably another podcast. So yeah.

So babyhood. My little Cove is 13 months now. And I was reflecting—and I have been really since she's been born that she has ripped through many of the physical transitions. And I think I've shared that. And that's been strange. And it's also not something that I've wanted to judge as good or bad. But I've been amazed. I mean truly when you have eight other children that, let's say, don't walk until 14, 15, 16

months and then you have this baby that starts literally running at 9 months, that's really crazy. So I've had to just keep coming back into my body or something with her because she's been so quick at everything. Her birth was like that. Her birth was kind of no big deal. Just shot out. And that's how her life has been. So, again, that uniqueness. Even when we parent a bunch of children, how do we approach each transition with each different child in a way that really allows us to see it and embrace it? And I don't know that I've done such a great job with that because it has felt like this comparison. And it has felt like, "Wait a minute. I'm not ready for this." And I've not felt like that before. So I was just saying to Jason last night—and I say this a lot. "She was not a baby." Should I ever get the chance to birth and hold another baby I will appreciate it in a different way because Cove was in my arms for what felt like minutes. It really felt like she was born and I held her. And then she was standing.

She was standing at like four months and pulling herself up on stuff. And so she just wasn't a lap baby. She wasn't a snuggler. She didn't want to be held. She didn't want to be cuddled. So her physical transitions to standing, to sitting, to crawling, to walking, to running, to climbing have all been really quick and seamless and easy for her and just surprising. So that has affected me. It has. And I don't even know that I have words for it. But it's just been like, "Whoa." And like simultaneously amazed by her. So I met this mom yesterday actually at the mountain bike festival. Really wonderful people that have a pizza truck. Pizza is amazing. They're called Dough Bros. And if you're ever—I don't know why you would come across this food truck. They go to all kinds of festivals here kind of in the southwest. They are fantastic.

And so I had a really sweet conversation with this mom. She's the one that runs the food truck. And we've been seeing each other for four to five years now. And this is the first time we've talked. And it was just really sweet. We were talking about children growing up and how fast it seems like these transitions happen. And how last year her daughter, who is now four, was just different. Being really clingy and not wanting to talk to people at these festivals and this year had completely blossomed and had made her own little mini food truck kind of thing like she wanted to sell stuff and meet people. And so that was so sweet. And also these people have seen my kids, a lot of them, grow up. So even though we had—I had never talked to this woman until yesterday. It was really sweet. And they give my oldest daughter a free pizza every year because they just remember her. And they're always like amazed how big and beautiful she's gotten. And (sigh). It's all so sweet and all that.

Anyway, I think the real reason I was going to say this is because we were talking about little girls and how strong and confident her daughter is. And I was holding Cove, and Cove was trying to walk on the other side of the pizza truck to get a lollipop. I mean 13 months. And she knew what she wanted and how she was going to go get it. So we were talking about that. And just how it's so important—especially with girls—to

continually say out loud these qualities. It sounds silly. But so often, we're like, "Cove, you're so cute. We can't stand you." And she was saying the same. And yeah. Just being reminded to say, "Wow, Cove. You are so strong. And I'm really impressed with the fact that you can stand on the coffee table. How do you do it?" So maybe that's a great way to kind of press us as the mother these transitions is just to kind of speak them out loud and just express how you're feeling. And in this case, it's just like wow. Admiration for this really crazy, crazy, sweet, strong, beautiful, very capable baby that I have. So that's been unusual.

The other children I've had—it's been—I mean I hate to say more typical. But yeah. More average rites of passage with the physical. The walking. And the crawling. And yeah. We were super happy that they did it when they did. And I don't feel like I've ever rushed any of my children to do that. I don't know how you rush a kid to do that actually. Maybe you can't. But I feel like often people are impatient like, "When will they take their first steps?" Maybe buying things like gadgets or whatever to kind of help them figure it out. But they all figure it out. And the latest kid to walk that I had was Rune, who I've already said, has had more challenges with transitions. So he didn't walk until 18 months. And he didn't walk until his younger sister was born. And literally right after she was born, he started walking. Like he needed to wait for that, and he wanted, I think, to probably just be the baby for as long as possible because he and Belgium are only like 16 months apart.

All right. Tea sip. Let's see. This is kind of blabby, but I guess that's how this often goes. So you get the gist. And I guess, again, it's just a reminder/suggestion that if you're new to parenting—maybe you have a young baby—just relish it as much as you can. Just enjoy it. There's almost the next stage. And often we're looking ahead so much to the next stage that we forget how glorious it is. And I don't know about you, if you've been this way before. But I've always been a little sad when they walk. I always say they go from being four leggeds to two leggeds. And that's a big deal. It's also a big deal to crawl in the first place. And to move your body. When we're born, we can't do anything really. So these are all just huge things. And they happen gradually most of the time. But—and also most of the time, they happen, right? Even if it's not quite when we think.

And once a kid goes to walking, they don't go back to crawling. And that's sort of poignant. It's just the evolution of ourselves as humans. There's always a next phase. So I won't get too caught up in that. But babyhood is hard and amazing and, again, just happens in this slow mo. But then all of a sudden, it's done. And they're walking. So just being patient, I guess, I would suggest to those who are looking for a suggestion. Not rushing any of it. Not letting the relatives or the grandparents tell you, "Oh, they should be walking by now." No. If they're not walking, then they shouldn't be walking. I guess there's always a balance too with giving our babies opportunities, of course, to

figure their bodies out. So I do believe in that. And I guess by that I mean if you're literally holding your baby 24/7, you never put them down, and they don't get a chance to explore and kind of wiggle around and—yes. They will hit their faces and all of those things. Then yeah. Sometimes the development is not quite on track which is a terrible way to say it. But you know what I mean. Sometimes, yeah. There are ways we hold our own children back is what I'm saying.

So I guess we're all taking a look at that sometimes. And that's another topic. Why would we do that? Most of the time it's not intentional. Maybe it feels really good to hold your baby. Or maybe you travel all the time and it's like where are you going to put the baby down. And eventually, that kid is going to do all the things anyway. But it could be that they're not quite able to build up the muscles and such that they need because of something we're doing. A great example is probably those Bumbo seats. And hey, I had one. I think I had one for probably my fourth baby still. I thought they were cute and cool. And I'd sit the kid on the counter and put them in it, so I could feed them. And maybe they're fine for that. But in other words, there are gadgets and things nowadays that aren't conducive to kids doing things on their own timeframe. And they maybe contribute to, ironically, some of the obsession around the timeline.

Yeah. I'm getting really, really into this podcast. So other kinds of things that come up are eating food. That's also a really big transition and sort of a strange one I feel like in our culture. I'd be curious to hear how it is actually in other countries, in other cultures. My gut feeling about it—not about the other culture thing because I don't know. But my gut feeling about that as a mother always—except the first time when I just kind of did what everyone else did which was like, “You feed this food at this age. And you use baby food, and blah, blah, blah.” I did do that with Amelia because I just didn't know. But since then, even something like that, it's a very gradual transition most of the time. You don't just feed a baby a hamburger. The little tastes of things and little bites of things and little nibbles and little licks. And if they're doing that just while you're eating, that's probably going to be how they learn to eat and where their tastes come from. And so my opinion, you don't have to have it. Baby food in the jar and that kind of thing—yeah. It can be convenient. But so tasteless. Who eats that way? We don't eat that way as adults. Why are we so afraid to feed babies actual food? I don't know.

So I've relinquished that whole idea for myself, and it's worked out great. Our babies just eat what we eat. They eat when we eat. They might eat other times too. Not afraid of a baby choking. Obviously, you're not giving them crazy big pieces. Cove has only four teeth, and she eats absolutely everything. So I think it's also just, again, relinquishing our fear around all of that. Some parents are really afraid to feed babies food whether it's choking or allergies and that kind of thing. So totally. You have to perhaps respect your own family's history. Cove is actually super allergic to salmon, which is weird, and none of my other kids are. She loves it though. And I only found

that out the hard way which is her barfing all over the place. So you're constantly learning. And there are kids that need more attention to that but sort of in the general way. The way we feed babies is sort of a strange transition. And then a lot of kids kind of wind up with food issues which, again, is another topic.

But more fluid in this transition has worked for us. And, again, it is a big deal. And every time a baby starts to eat food it's the obvious. They are not nursing as much. You are not their primary source. And so there's all kinds of feelings around that. And then, of course, just the physical, right? Their poop totally changes and becomes less pleasant. And you wish, in some ways, "I wish I could just go back to breast milk." It's so easy. Everywhere you go, you have it. You don't need to worry about choking or any of those things. It's just so easy. So these are hard in a way. We watch and feel our babies literally grow up right under our eyes. And it's just bittersweet.

So obviously, a lot of these are about Cove. So I do want to get through a little bit to some of the older kids. But I did want to just mention one more that she's been going through which is night weaning. So this is a big topic. And maybe I should wait or talk about it again on another podcast. But night weaning. So she nurses all day, was nursing all night. She's 13 months now. And I just can't take it anymore at night. I just can't take it anymore. There's no reason—and this is my opinion. There's no reason why she would need to nurse so much at night other than it's kind of a bad habit. She gets plenty of food during the day. She gets plenty of breast milk, plenty of water. So this has been my experience with my children that I find around this age—anywhere from 13 to 16 months—night weaning is fairly simple. And as a result, we all start to sleep better. We're all happier. And the baby actually starts to sleep more and more deeply. So yeah. That's kind of where we're at. And she's in our bed. I don't leave. Sorry. I'm so stuffy today. I don't know what's up. It must be the spring.

Yeah. My husband and I are still—she's still with us in bed. And he's just the one to kind of comfort her when she wakes up. And sometimes she does cry. I won't lie. And he kind of has to just—we both have to just listen to it for a few minutes until she settles back down and lays back down with her little blankie and goes back to sleep. So I've needed to do that for my sanity, for my own physical health, and, again, I don't have regrets because I've done it so many times. And it's always like a breath of fresh air. You're like, "Oh my god. I am actually sleeping now. Why was I not sleeping last month?" Well, you want to time these transitions. If we feel like we're in charge of them, which is up for grabs—are we—should we be? As the parents, do we dictate a transition? I think that's a really great question. And I don't have the one answer. I don't have the, "No. Always let the child dictate the transition," because, obviously, with night weaning I'm dictating the transition. And I think that's worked out great.

But yeah. There's other transitions. And I guess we're just all unique, right? So when these things come up, we each do have to decide. Is this something I'm going to facilitate? Or does nature know best, right? And I think there's equally a possibility that nature knows best. Maybe there is a reason. I'm sure there is a reason why she was needing to nurse every five minutes all night. I'm sure there is. I've just kind of drawn my own boundary with that. But I'm sure that there are still needs there whether they're even just emotional or what? I don't even know. I mean she can't tell me. So that's a risk. That's a risk I've taken. A decision we've made for our family, again, for our own health and sanity. But you don't have to do it that way. There are plenty of people that are just going to nurse all night until the child just doesn't want to. And that might be age two, three, four. So, again, I guess the question is not one I can answer. It's just the rhetorical like do we facilitate transitions or do we not? And with each child, with each transition, we're deciding how much kind of force we're putting behind it.

And maybe it's surprising to you to hear that I do night wean my babies because—yeah. In general, I'm much of a let it run its course kind of thing. But I'm just not with this particular thing. So whatever. Whatever you need to do. I do want to talk about toilet training though because I actually feel the opposite way about that. And, again, there is no right answer. I'm not judging. I'm not looking down on anyone if they've chosen to facilitate toilet training. Make it happen. If you feel like, "Oh my gosh. My kid is ready, but they're just not doing it. Or they need this piece. I'm going to get the piece. I'm going to get the little toilet. I'm going to get the underwear. I'm going to,"—whatever. Come up with a plan. There's certainly all of this kind of information out there on the Internet, or you might know someone that's like, "Oh my gosh. I have the way to toilet train your kid. Weekend naked. It's going to happen." So, again, we're the parents. We get to decide how we want to participate in these rites of passage.

So toilet training—up to this point, I've always just let it happen. I've never tried. I've never encouraged more than the normal frustration in a way when you're changing another diaper saying, "When are you going to use the toilet?" I've never done anything more than that other than maybe buy the little—excuse me—little toilet to have around. But never forced anyone. I've tried my best anyway not to have shamed any of them certainly with not wanting to do it or having accidents. I totally don't believe in that. And I actually have to acknowledge my own part in the whole thing, which is my babies are in diapers, right? That's not a thing cross culturally that is accepted or done. Certainly, many of you out there, I'm sure, are great elimination communication. And maybe you've never used diapers. Good for you. Nope. Never been one of the things that I was able to spend time on. So my babies have always worn diapers.

So I think we have to take the responsibility there. We teach a kid to poop in a diaper from a couple days old, right? And then suddenly, we're supposed to want them to do it somewhere else. And that idea—it's physical, right? There's so many physical

sensations for them. There's so much. It's emotional. It might be scary to them to think of not having a diaper. It's so—I think it's comforting. I think it's the routine is so safe for so many kids. So, again, our own responsibility in that. Maybe that's why I've never felt like I was going to kick a kid out of diapers. But there is always a but, right? But Deva will be three. Yes. Three. At the end of this month. And I can't say she's showing no signs because that wouldn't be fair. Of course, she is. She knows what a potty is. She knows that that would be the desired place. She knows what underwear are. She loves to wear them even over her diaper. Isn't that hilarious? So those are signs. Those are signs of getting ready. And I think the best advice that was ever given to me years and years ago—and this was with my third child, Talula. I was talking to the Waldorf kindergarten teacher here who is very wise and old and has been doing this a long time.

I was frustrated I guess. So there you go. I was frustrated that maybe Talula wasn't doing the toilet thing as quickly I wanted and blah, blah, blah. And this wise elder said, "There's many, many elements to being ready. There's physical readiness, and there is all of the other ways. Some of which we can see. Some of which we can't. And we just can't know where the child is at." So in other words, just keep on. Just keep supporting her and eventually she will hit all the areas of readiness, and then she will do it. There won't be a need to cajole her or bribe her. It's like she will be ready just like we all were obviously. We all did these things. So that was super helpful. And even though that was like—I don't know how many years ago. Ten years ago. I play that in my mind for almost of these transitions. That what are the signs of readiness as I think I understand them. What am I maybe not seeing? What's unique to this child? Because we're weighing all of those things to support this rite of passage. And it's normal, I think, as humans to have our own thoughts and feelings, again, about the timeline. And something like toilet training—man. I mean we're all—we all get it. How many more diapers do we want to change? You've got this kid that is not pooping like a baby and needing your help with that. And it can be frustrating to have to keep doing that.

And it's so easy for us, right? And I catch myself doing it. Like, "Just go poop in the toilet, Deva. I know you can do it." And that's not fair. I don't say that out loud. But I do think it because I know she could. I physically know she knows how to hold her poop and then she knows when she would want to let it go. I know she can do that part. But, again, that's only one phase of her readiness. She's not emotionally ready. And if you met Deva, she is the baby in our house. Cove is sort of a grown up kid. And, again, it's not a comparison. It could be that Cove ends up pooping in a potty before Deva because they are just so different personality wise. And so Deva is a baby. She has relished being the baby. She's three years younger than her older sister which is the biggest gap we have. So she was the baby. And she loves being the baby. And it's cute. And I mean it's just all the things. I don't even know what it is. It's just Deva.

It's just the way she is, and I know it won't last forever, of course. She's not going to poop in a diaper forever.

So here we are. We're just hanging out. And we probably mention it every day, but what is there to do? I'm not going to force this child. I wouldn't even know how to force her. And total transparency, we've tried bribing. We've tried, "We'll do this with you. Or we'll buy you this toy." Nope. Not interested. So there is me being honest. Trying to force that rite of passage sometimes. And then I really have to catch myself, and it's like why? Why do I care this much? Well, the obvious reasons. Just buying more diapers. Kind of always having to deal with that. But hey. That's life. And so finding my own patience and just supporting her where she needs to be supported feels like the most important. And certainly about to turn three isn't anything crazy, if we're going to put a timeline on it. I haven't had this experience, but I've certainly known people whose children wore diapers for a lot longer than that especially at night. And so I don't even know what that's about. And I'm not saying there isn't a time to facilitate in a stronger way kind of like the night weaning. I'm sure there is. And I'm sure many of you have heard or experienced different ways of facilitating toilet training. I just haven't. And maybe I'll learn something. Maybe it will feel like we're at a point where she does need kind of more concrete coaching or help.

And when I think back to the other children actually, they really just encouraged each other. Maybe that's why I've not felt like it was something as a parent I needed to do. Usually, just kids watching other kids they're encouraged, and they want to be like the older sibling. Or the older sibling will kind of take it on which is funny and be like, "I want to help you. Let's pee in the potty together," or whatever it is. So I don't know. To be continued there. But that's my experience thus far. And, again, it doesn't mean I have—I know anything at all. These are just my kids. These are my experiences. You'll have your own. And that's why it's all so beautiful and strange and why we can learn so much from each other. So that's that.

I'm feeling like I want to be done with this podcast. I guess one more rite of passage that I really have enjoyed and found initially when it first happened sort of shocking in its potency was losing teeth. So I don't know how you all feel about that. I mean when I was a kid I remember it was fun to lose teeth. I remember the feeling, and it's kind of exciting. And then it feels different in your mouth. You know. You all know. And then the tooth fairy, if you do that. And so I don't know. No big deal, right? But with my own kids, I was just surprised at how much I felt like, "Whoa. Gone is the little baby tooth. Gone is that tiny little thing that you had from day one inside your mouth even up in your gum. And now wow. Adult tooth." That tooth will be with you until you are old and gray. There's just something like whoa. And I don't know that kids even feel that. But as a mother, I was shocked at how seriously I took the tooth losing thing.

So Amelia, of course, was the first to lose teeth. And she—yeah. She's a sensitive—she was a sensitive child but not like overly sensitive. So maybe that's why it was even more shocking that she was really emotional when she lost her first tooth. Like I mean now that I'm in birth work, it was a lot like having a baby. I know that sounds maybe overly dramatic. But the tooth is loose. Does she pull it? Does she facilitate the birth? Or does she just wait? She had to decide these things for herself and work with her own body. What was she feeling? Was it painful when she pulled? All the things. So even then, my MO was just to support in the way the body does it in that case. So yeah. Let's not yank it out unless you want to. I mean it's your tooth. But just let your body do it. Your body will do it. Your body knows how to eject a tooth. That's just the fact of the matter. So I think it's such a cool thing to think about, isn't it? As a young child, five, six, seven-year-old child. Control. Your body changing literally under your fingers. A tooth being something that you've had and is now falling out. It's sort of freaky. How many people out there have weird tooth falling out dreams? I certainly do sometimes because it's like—I think it's just in us as something that is very weird.

And, of course, if you're an adult, you don't want that to happen. And the feeling is so like palpable and memorable even though we're—most of us many, many decades past losing our baby tooth, right? It's something that sticks with us. So there is something huge about it on every level. Spiritually, emotionally, physically. It is a huge transition. And if you follow any of the Waldorf stuff, it's really a sign. It's a sign that the child is ready to move on to their next phase usually their seven-year phase. And they're ready to start learning and reading. It's one of the actual, physical signs of readiness. So anyway, back to Amelia, she was sort of freaked out. And like I said, kind of worked through that whole thing of like, "What do I do? And what if it does this and that?" And so here's the funny part of the story. She swallowed the tooth. She was so worked up and so nervous, kind of that she would screw it up, or I don't know what that she swallowed the tooth. So her first tooth we never saw. And she laughs about it now.

And not all of my kids have been as serious. True lost teeth recently. And he's just an easygoing kid. It was fun and exciting for him. He was so proud of himself. It didn't seem to come with anything deeper that I could sense. But still a big deal. It was a big deal for me to know that my littlest boy has now big boy teeth. But Ever, who is younger than him, lost, I think, two teeth in a row. Like literally one day and then the next day. And she was very much like Amelia. It was like a little labor for her. And she was like checking back and letting me know what was going on. And, "Oh, there was blood on the tissue. And oh, it was moving this way." And anyway, but it was fun. It was fun to support her through that. And I wonder, of course, with my girls if I get the honor of supporting them through any births of their own babies how much of this kind of comes back as rite of passage. These roles that we play.

So I think supporting kids through teeth losing can be really fun and really surprising and really deep and really crazy intentional and really a place of wisdom for them which is, ultimately, how I end up feeling because they go through all these things kind of like a labor. And it alters their physical state. And emotionally, they might be upset. Ever was. “No, tooth. I don’t want you to leave.” And they kind of know. It means I’m growing up. And then they do it. They do it, and it’s done. And they’re proud of themselves. And suddenly, life goes on even though they’re different, right? So isn’t that always kind of the way with a rite of passage that we go through it. It can be whatever we think it’s going to be. And then we’re done. We’re through it, and something else will be coming. And that’s childhood. And that’s mothering. That’s mothering in a nutshell. That there is always, if we’re lucky, something else coming that is exciting and new and will bring so many changes to ourselves as mothers, to these children, to our families, and just embracing that. I think that’s what I remind myself too. This is life. These little moments, these tooth losing moments, these Deva, won’t you ever use the toilet moments are life. They are why we’re here.

And it’s not just about getting to the next goal even though it’s easy to feel like it is. And just like life. Once we get there, everything will be fine. Once Deva uses the toilet, life will be better. No. It’ll still be great. It’ll still be life. So how do we support our children? How do we support ourselves? And then even with partners, how do we do that together? I don’t have the answers. Just working through it myself. And this podcast has gotten way too long. So I hope you’ve enjoyed these, at least, early rites of passage. And perhaps there will be another podcast for those of you that have older children because, obviously, I didn’t really hit on any of the older rites of passage. Like I mentioned reading. I think that’s a huge one. Just independence to do things alone. Obviously, first cycles. Puberty. First boyfriends, first girlfriends, whatever. Driving. There are so many more that I could touch on that I’m currently in. But I think I’ll save that, and maybe we’ll do an older children or teenager kind of rites of passage.

But today I hope you enjoyed this little review. And I’d love to hear from you. maryn@indiebirth.org is always a great way to reach me. I get back to emails as quickly as I can. And then, of course, this new social network. So one more time, social.indiebirth.org. We’ll see you there. Have a great day.

(closing music)