

(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: Good morning. Maryn here on a beautiful fall Monday. Monday is typically a travel day for me, or has been the last couple of months going up to Flagstaff to see mamas up there. But different this week. Kind of taking the week off for lack of a better description with their permission, of course. We're waiting on a few babies up there to some very confident mamas that felt okay about seeing us soon hopefully. So that's a big deal for me, just waiting on these couple of babies before I get really close to my own birth which is kind of mind boggling. But isn't that always the way it is, right? It seems so far away. And then before you know it, you're in the window. And I'm not quite in the window yet. Like I said, they will birth first. But then I will be in the window, and it will seem crucial that I finish up all the tasks. I've been working pretty hard on postpartum prep, which has been fun. Getting kinds involved and just doing that preparation is really important to me. So practically speaking, it totally is. I'll have food that has been prepared by my children mostly and myself with love as I'm gratefully sitting there nursing a new baby.

And then there's also just the way that preparation for that seems to symbolize all the other preparation that we do for birth. A lot of it isn't as tangible. It's not a recipe. There isn't a recipe. There aren't actual ingredients, but all of the things we're doing on the inside to get ready--all the thoughts and feelings and dreaming of birth and this baby. It's really a surreal time. So the fact that I can string words together for this podcast--we'll see if that happens. Pregnancy also has the gift, for many of us, of helping us be more direct. I don't know that I'll be more concise than normal although it's really a goal this morning because I want to talk about this topic. But I don't want to over talk about it, if that makes sense. I don't feel like it needs to be over complicated. And I feel like if I hit the major points--I hope I remember them. That's going to be the hardest part because I don't have a lot written down. But if I can hit the major points of what I'm feeling, I'll feel productive in this because it really is a topic that's been coming up a lot lately.

And as you know, if you're a listener of my podcast, that's really how I decide on topics. We get a lot of emails, and I love suggestions. But in the end, when I sit down here at the microphone, it's got to be easy to flow out. And it has to feel relevant. So this idea of should I choose a freebirth for my very first birth is something that is brought to my table here a lot. Almost literally. It's brought right here to this office. Not to mention, people online, in our community all over the world that we talk with and do virtual prenats with. This is a real question. And I think it has just a really practical component. And then there's more to talk about.

So should I choose a freebirth for my first birth is a question we get a lot. And right off the bat, I feel like if that's a question then there is more to be investigated. And what does that actually mean as far as yes or no? I don't have any idea. And I guess that is a take home of this topic, which is no one knows but you. But yet, it's a legitimate question to be asking especially people that know about birth and in a community where you feel safe. So not judging for having the question, but I think if you have the question then you're at a point where you're in investigation mode. Or the answer should be no. I think put really simply there is definitely a category of women that is so self assured. And I've met many of them. I definitely was not one of them my first birth, so that's full disclosure. I never would have chosen a freebirth for my first birth. And I didn't. In fact, I chose a hospital birth.

But that's neither here nor there. Just saying that if it's a question you're asking then there's more to think about. Oh, the self assured woman. That's kind of where I was going. Yeah. I mean these are really fantastic women. And not more fantastic than other women but conscious in a way that this isn't actually a question for them, right? And a lot of women fit into this category. Maybe they're first births. Maybe they're not. And probably a higher percentage are not because there is something about birth that really expands our consciousness and, usually, allows us to gain a lot of wisdom into life and death and ourselves. And it's just a fact that most of us don't have that the first time. But, again, I'm talking about kind of the outliers that do have that the first time. And like I said, I've met many of them. I feel like a lot of people that take our courses, even the doula course for example—not even just birth prep courses—fit into this category.

But it's a rare breed. And this kind of woman, like I said, is so self assured. She's conscious. She's very mature. And that may or may not have to do with her actual physical age. But there is something really kind of like wise and elderly in the best sense about a woman like this. So she's never had a baby. But maybe she's had X, Y, and Z life experiences particularly spiritual experiences or maybe with her body. And it sets her apart from sort of your average woman having her first baby. And she doesn't question it. She doesn't say, "Should I have a free birth?" She may not even know the label. She just somewhere knows in her deeply she's going to have this baby at home.

Maybe by herself. Doesn't feel the need for support or guidance from another woman probably. May or may not have the need for a lot of intellectual education. And her baby comes out.

I think that's sort of this holy grail of maybe where we all want to be headed evolutionarily speaking one day. And I love that. And it's real. And I think it's great. It's just not very common. So those people, in my experience, just do it. Like I said, they're not asking a question. They're not looking for permission. They're not really confused about what they want. And, again, those stories vary as much as people do. And I don't have too much more to say about that because I think that's how I see it. And I'm sure you know people like that. You may even be one of those people. And yeah. They are going to do what they're going to do. And there's just no question about where they're at in their bodies or just completely in the same vein of consciousness and trust. So I wish more women were at that place. Like I said, I certainly wasn't the first time or probably even the whole first bunch of times. But that's okay. Everyone is on their journey, and I don't know that that's a goal. I'm just trying to kind of like point out how I see people differing.

So those people, as far as being a midwife goes, there's nothing to really offer them other than, "Hey, if you need a friend, if you need an ear, I'm here. And maybe you'll have use for that in your pregnancy or not." And usually, they don't. And, again, that's amazing. And really astounding. So all the respect for that especially people that are just so self assured, I guess, is the best word I can come up with this morning about what they want. And there is really no question. And not to say, those women aren't doing incredibly hard inner work on their own. They definitely are. So I'm not necessarily making it sound like they don't work hard for what they want. But it's just different than some other sort of groups of people that might be considering freebirth as we'll hear.

So those women aside—so we're not going to keep talking about those women. We're not going to question their choices. We're not questioning anyone's choices. But if someone is asking me a question, then the question gets put back on them, right? I mean that's my job as a midwife. And I think as someone that cares about women choosing from a place of power is when a question gets asked of me, the direction is back on them. So should I have a freebirth the first time turns into what do you actually want and a billion more questions I would have for people. What is it that you're looking to feel during your birth? What is your past history? Maybe you haven't had a baby, but maybe you've had other experiences with your body. Miscarriages, abortions, who knows what? All kinds of things that have made you feel a little bit more defensive and protective around your physical space which totally makes sense.

So where are you coming from? And what do you want? I think those are really very good questions to start with when someone is considering this idea. And it's not my job to necessarily evaluate those answers even though I'm being asked. So I can ask the questions, but they're really for someone to take back to their own private space and think about and reflect upon. What I can offer people is the fact that midwifery care can fill the gaps for someone that is understanding that the medical model of midwifery, of birth is not what they want. That's not going to suite them. But they don't quite understand how they would be alone because there are things they do want. So, again, back to the first question. What do you want? If you're wanting guidance, if you're wanting support especially from another woman, if you're wanting access to education and kind of the newest and best research around whatever topics, if you're looking for help with how do I cope with labor, how do I even prepare for that, if you're looking for support around your partnership and birth and mothering and parenting, these are just four or five of the topics. And generally, there are literally 10, 20, 30, 40, 50 more that can come out of working with a midwife that truly does care about your growth and expansion as a human and as a pregnant woman during your pregnancy because we know that leads to birth.

So we talk about this idea of freebirth as if it stands alone, in a sense. Like it's such a male concept of what am I going to do when the baby is ready to come out. And it's not just male. It's kind of western culture. We're only interested in the main event. We're not necessarily interested in the growth or the journey. So we see it as, "Well, what do I want when the baby comes out?" But most women don't know that there is so much to be offered during the months prior to that that influence the birth. So I've had many experiences here especially locally. We offer lots of free resources. We have a free workshop. We do a free pregnancy circle among many other things. So we often will cross paths with women that are having their first babies. And they feel very confident that they are going to have a freebirth. And I'm not sure we help things, in a sense, because a lot of our material, our free workshop, is based on the fact that birth works. You don't need someone. You could choose someone. But birth doesn't need anything more than ourselves and our surrender and a million other things honestly that we often work for in today's day and age. But never painted as you need to hire someone to have a nice or a successful birth because I don't believe that is true.

But, again, there are so many benefits. So people will come, and they'll watch these videos with us. And they'll think, "Oh my gosh. Babies just fall out. Why would I want anyone? My baby is going to fall out too." And they miss the fact that there is nine months of introspection and growth. And, again, you don't have to have a guide for that, but it can be super helpful. So they miss out on that. They miss out on the opportunity to have space held for them during tough emotional times and fears in pregnancy. They miss the opportunity to have someone that's been through it many

times and witnessed hundreds of women hold space for all kinds of things. Relationship things, money things, life things, scared to be a mother things, like how many issues do we all deal with in prep for birth but especially the first time. So many.

So they miss that. And they just kind of mosey through their pregnancies, which on one hand is really awesome because pregnancy just happens for most of us when we're healthy. We don't think about it, right? A baby is just growing. Hopefully, we're eating well, and all the things to physically grow a baby. We don't think about it too much. And then birth arrives. So I mean put simply, if you haven't used the months to dig a little deeper, probably—probably—not all the time—probably a birth is going to be a little bit more difficult than you anticipated. And this is such a—it's such a layered conversation because I know I always think about the women who don't even know they're pregnant. I think about them a lot actually. Those TV shows and the stories you can read online. And I think they're so fascinating. And even in preparation for my own birth, I've been thinking more about this group of women because, for whatever reason, they don't consciously know—whether or not they subconsciously know, I don't know. Who could say?

But there is this interesting aspect of having not conscious psychological awareness—awareness—awarement—awareness that a birth—that a baby is growing. That a birth is impending that, for many of them, makes birth sort of uneventful, right? Isn't that fascinating? It's fascinating. So I mean for better or for worse when we know we're pregnant we live in a culture that it's very hard to get away from all that goes with that, right? So some of the inner work, as I refer to that I think is important during pregnancy, in your first pregnancy especially is really an unraveling. It's an undoing perhaps of beliefs you've held your whole life. The way you were born. You can't get away from your own birth story, and the first time it was so important. So if a woman comes in here and her own birth, she was born by traumatic C-section. She was breech. Her mom has told her for 25 years now how the cord was wrapped around her neck, and she almost died. Whether or not this is factually true doesn't matter. We're left with this emotional memory.

So we can't get away from all the cultural nonsense we've been indoctrinated in and think that intellectual knowledge or this idea of baby's just fall out is going to apply to us. I mean it might. I guess there is certainly just the stroke of luck or whatever else, whatever other random occurrences just happen in our natural world. But generally speaking, the woman that doesn't really engage in the inner process whether it's an undoing or whatever you want to call it will generally—generally have a more difficult birth. So then you start to think is that the kind of birth that you want to be alone for or not. And I still don't have the answer other than to say I've witnessed many first time births that are long and difficult despite everyone's best envisioning—excuse me—of how this will go. And there's not judgment on that. I couldn't say why, right? It's not

like, “Oh, she didn’t do this thing, and that’s why her birth is long.” I have no idea. I don’t know that anyone knows, but that’s the path. And it can be when having a midwife is really helpful. And, again, hopefully for the nine months of having had help along the way to form a solid relationship of trust and then in the moment assisting you and supporting you and not doing anything, right?

A lot of people who choose freebirth are afraid that they will be violated. That something will be done to them. They will be abused. They will not be asked consent of. And those are real concerns. I’m just saying in my midwifery world. Those are not happening. Those things are not happening. Women are given, of course—not given. They already have the power, right? So we’re there to assist and help as needed, but we’re not insisting on anything or doing anything or making someone have a vaginal exam or anything nonsensical like that. But often women in that position of a long, hard birth will ask for those things. And they will want reassurance. Or they’ll just want someone to say, “You know what? This is longer than you thought. This is normal. Your baby is fine. You’re fine. I know it’s hard, but you can do it.” And that’s a really simple job of a midwife. And certainly, other people are capable of saying those words as well. However, I do think it comes from having a lot of experience that you could say that with any kind of assurance. And we’re not God either. So we don’t know ultimately how things will work out.

But if you see enough births and you have the things to look for and the things to kind of keep tabs on and you know the women really well, then your chances of being correct when you say, “Hey, this is normal even though it’s not what you wanted at this moment,” is pretty accurate. So it’s not meant to scare people into hiring a midwife. It’s just trying to explain that there is more to it than that moment of birth. However, if you get to that moment of birth without a midwife to support you whether or not you’ve done quote on quote inner work or not, you got to deal with what comes. And you know what? I just don’t envy any first time mom that’s in that position of being in pain probably, being scared probably because you’re not automatically guaranteed feeling fearless and confident in any birth especially your first when there is no one there possibly but your sister or your husband or both. Neither of them have any idea what’s going on. And you become more scared and more tense, and everything becomes more painful by the minute because you have no road map. You honestly don’t know. Is this going to go on for an hour? Is this going to go on for 20 more hours?

And, of course, midwives don’t necessarily either. But as I’m explaining, there’s lots of things we look for, and there’s lots of ways we can provide the help that we can from the outside. Now of course, someone still has to do it. You still have to have your baby. But being advised to rest or eat or if we help someone kind of get comfortable for a little nap and set it in perspective of like, “Okay. You’re getting close. Your body is doing good work, but it’s not time. So how about resting? Let’s get you set up for that.” No

expectations. Probably this baby is not coming in the next hour, so let's get you comfortable. You change the mindset. And I think that is definitely the gift of a good midwife that you know well and trust. You're not looking to her to tell you what to do. You're looking to her to say, "Hey, based on my experience and what I know about you, let's try this game plan when things are getting rough or they're not quite flowing." You are. You're trusting someone with that because you've never been through it. So, again, I'm not talking about that little group of women that doesn't need to know. Somehow they've accessed past lives. And I'm not saying that jokingly at all. There are totally people that seem to have a knowing of the whole process before they've been through it the first time in this life for real. For real.

And then there are those of us that kind of don't. And we'd really feel like we were flying blind if we hit any kind of road bumps without a little bit of a tour guide, so to speak, because we don't get a map to birth whether or not we have someone there or not. But I guess I'm trying to kind of crush the naïve picture some people have. And you know what? If you really have a picture that's important to you to maintain, you don't have to allow it to be crushed by me or anyone. Again, if you're so self assured, you just go do it. But if you're someone that's on the fence and you're not really understanding the benefits of having support and you don't really know what to look at during your journey, then I'm just saying it could be rough. It could be rough there at the end. And I can't think of a lot of first time moms that say they're having a freebirth. And these are people like I kind of know or in passing. I'm not just reading random message boards or something.

People we have interacted with or people that are well known in the freebirth world that successfully avoided medical intervention during their first birth. That's sort of factual to me. Aside from, again, this unique group of women, right? Sort of your average woman in this average world facing all the typical, normal, cultural stuff not to mention personal stuff, relationship stuff, just all of it. Normal human. Very few will have a successful freebirth at home. And if they do, often there is a lot of trauma associated because they weren't prepared in the way they needed to. Or they go to the hospital after birth for something or whatever it is. And it's such a funny thing because it becomes like a—are we judging people for going to the hospital? No. We're not. We're saying that sometimes we make birth harder for ourselves by not having awareness of our full range of choices because going to the hospital is totally a choice. And as we know, most women in the world—or in this country—in the western world at least choose this voluntarily.

And I honestly don't have judgment on it, as I've said. It's not for me. I would never choose it again. But I totally get it. And I think that's also honest, in a sense. I'm scared. I don't trust birth. I believe my doctor or my hospital based midwife knows more than I do. I want to be safe. All the beliefs that we all hear. Great. Then go do it.

I think the free birthing gets tricky because a lot of women choosing that actually have the same belief system. But it's just not out in the open to them, right? No one else cares. It doesn't need to be out in the open to anyone else. But they're not being honest with themselves. And, again, there's just the pure fact that if you've never experienced birth before, it may or may not be what you think. And I think that's sort of the nicest—yeah—least complicated way of even answering the question. If you haven't had a birth before, you can choose whatever you want. But do you know what you're choosing? Do you know what you want? And do you know how much work goes into any sort of birth where you want to remain in your power, right? It's not just freebirth.

Freebirth is not necessarily the most powerful sort. And there is no sort. There's just women. There's just women that make choices from a place of integrity and intuition and autonomy. And then they birth how they birth. So I think that whole thing is kind of crazy too that people would think that somehow being alone would be more heroic. It would be more autonomous. It can be. But it doesn't necessarily have to be, and it won't necessarily be if you don't do the work. And I have other podcasts along these lines. I have one about autonomy and where that comes from and how it's not a label we slap on at the end. It's not a label we say we had. We are. We are autonomous beings in the way we interact with the world and the choices we make. And that goes way, way deeper than birth.

So one analogy I thought of—and I thought this was pretty good. Maybe you won't. But the more I thought about it the more I thought, "Yeah. I think this is as close as I can come to what I'm trying to say in another way." So to me, having your first baby, again, as a normal female human in this world at least here in western culture is like planning for a road trip when you've never driven a car, right? So just imagine that. You've never seen a car. You don't know maybe how to get in it, how to drive it. You've heard maybe some things about how to fuel it or how fast it will go or whatever. But you don't completely get the car you're operating in. And when you are in it and you're trying to get a place, you also aren't sure of the destination because you've never driven. And you've never been anywhere. And you don't really know how it might flow or how it doesn't flow, right? Like how highways have exits and exits flow into side streets or whatever it is.

So all the things. Think of all the things you, at this point, take for granted about driving. And how they're totally part of you now. You don't even think about them. It's like intuition and almost instinct, right? Which is kind of funny. But there definitely is that piece now that if you've been driving half your life you have. So imagine kind of knowing nothing other than someone's told you you're going to go from here to there, and this is going to happen. They've even told you, "You don't really even need to think about it. It's just if you're alone in your car, you'll be fine. You'll get there. It might be a

little scary, but you'll figure it out." That's essentially, I think, what a first birth feels like. And the destination thing, I feel like is super crucial to consider. You don't know where you are. I think Margo has said it in a way that I like. Just about like you don't have a map the first time, so you're kind of learning your body. And you're learning this potential map. And then, of course, if you have other babies, it could still be a different map. But you sort of have a better picture for it. And you associate that, the map, the look, the destination, with possible feelings in your body.

So, again, there are those group of women that somehow seem to have the map. They're not who I'm talking to. I'm talking to the rest of us who haven't felt that way and who acknowledge that the mystery is great and definitely birth remains a mystery, right? We're never going to get that map ahead of time and have it outlined and know how much we have to spend on gas and absolutely know that we're not going to hit traffic. No. And that's the beauty of it. And that's sort of the natural disaster element almost of birth. Not that it's catastrophic. But the way the weather is unpredictable, so is birth. Again, there are so many other things to talk about that I'm not going to keep blabbing on about here. But just the spiritual aspects. And I think the ways we do actually create and control more than we think. But I feel like those are advanced topics and almost advanced level techniques. And to get there, my opinion—and this is based on all of the women I've worked with as well as myself—is that those come. Those come when you're ready for them. That doesn't supersede probably knowing how birth works. That doesn't supersede being about to just take of yourself nutritionally in pregnancy and grow a healthy baby.

So there is definitely basics that have to be laid down before we start kind of envisioning the fact that even if this is a car trip, we get to invent it because I totally believe that. But I'm just talking about surface level I think I can do this. But yet, there is so many people that don't really have awareness of what this journey could actually be. And I mean that in the positive and negative. Like it's such a rich journey that someone could really be of utmost support to you on. And it could totally rock your world and change your life. Not to have had the support, per se. But to have had the guidance and to be able to go into yourself and to have feedback and someone holding a mirror. That's essentially, I think, another awesome things that midwives do. We're just holding a mirror up to you, and we're just kind of remaining expressionless next to the mirror while you see what's in there. And you work it out.

So the shamanic element of midwifery, I know, for me is real which, again, is I think why it's confusing to me why people would want to paint this all so black and white. It's either medicalized care where they just tell you how it's going to be and stick needles in you and hands up your vagina or you got to be alone and just hope your baby falls out. And maybe you're scared to even go deeper than that because the world loves to paint things black and white. The world loves to act like, "Well, if you're just alone, you won't

have that annoying midwife screwing up your process.” And while there are so many legitimate stories and examples of annoying midwives screwing up people’s processes, there’s just as many, if not more, of women who are alone and have to find a way out in a way they really didn’t want to and really didn’t expect.

So I guess ultimately, what’s my point? I can’t change anyone’s journey necessarily, and I’m not sure we should, right? We don’t get to alter someone’s path in that kind of way I don’t think. So sort of like in the highest spiritual way, people are going to do what they’re going to do. And that’s that. On the other hand because things aren’t black and white, I think there is a gray area of when someone’s ready. So if you’re listening to this and you’re one of these people and it resonates with you, you’re probably going to do one of a couple of things. You’re going to try to get real with yourself and figure out what it is you do want and kind of why you’re choosing the things you do for you. I mean not to please me or anyone else. But why you want them. And then what your options are. What your honest options are. And you know. We all know kind of deeper sometimes if we’re avoiding something or if we have investigation to do. It’s not always a comfortable place to be. But you might say to yourself, “You know what? Yeah. I really would love someone to support me. I’m going to look around. I’m going to put myself out there.” And that’s uncomfortable. “I’m going to call a couple people. I’m just going to talk with them. There’s no commitment I need to make at this moment. I don’t have to do anything I don’t want to do. But I am more humble, and I don’t have the experience of birth under my belt. And I’d rather be prepared. And I’d rather be supported. And I really am determined to have this baby at home. That’s really what I want and kind of I want to do that come hell or high water with the support that I have.”

That applies to some people because they know that if they’re alone and things start to get whatever just unexpected and they start to feel fearful or afraid and their bodies close up that then they’re in for less of a choice. It’s either just tough it out and hope you know what’s going on. A lot of women really lose a lot of their intuitive sense in situations like that. Or you go for medical help because those are your options at that point. You can’t call up a midwife you’ve never met. I don’t know any midwife that would come to someone they have never met before while they’re in labor not knowing anything about the situation. And what would that even help? We’re not miracle workers. We’re not going to get a baby out if someone has whatever. So much emotional trauma that they’re not going to allow that to happen. The benefit of this type of midwifery care is the relationship and all the counseling and all the things I’ve talked about today that hopefully wind up feeling really supportive for a woman having her first baby so that she can birth that baby in her power. It’s not about taking power from someone. And, conversely, by hiring someone there that you trust, that’s not giving away power. It can be, right? It can be in all kinds of ways.

But it certainly isn't a given. And that's another topic, in a sense. How do you work with someone on both sides and allow that power to remain in its rightful place? Which is with the woman. It's another great topic. But that's it for today. I hope you enjoyed this blab. As I get closer to birth, I don't know what kind of podcast release schedule we'll have over here. We have a couple fun things. We have a new course called *Reclaiming Your Joyful Pregnancy*. It's a quick, 7-day course. It's only like \$27. Something insane. And it's fun. It's on our Social platform, and it includes a lot of the things I do personally to just stay sane, a lot of other fun resources, activities, tools to be joyful, enjoy this time of life no matter what the world is doing, no matter what's going on around you. You're growing a baby. And all the happiness and joy you can muster for yourself is just so well appreciated by your body and by the world.

So you can check that course out. The link is probably best found on Instagram. Hate to say if you're not an Instagramer. But it's in our link tree, and that's probably the easiest place for me to point you in that direction. All right, everybody. Have a great day.

(closing music)