

(introductory music)

DISCLAIMER: “*Well, Actually...*” is a podcast about reimagining the way we approach the entirety of the birthing year. Margo’s goal is to combine her radical imagination with her knack for strategizing to bolster the birth revolution and a larger global revolution of feminine consciousness. “*Well, Actually...*” is a production of the Indie Birth Association and indiebirth.org. No material on this podcast should be considered medical advice. Birth is not a medical event. Now here’s your host, midwife, and teacher, Margo Blackstone.

(music)

MARGO: Hello, everybody, and welcome to today’s episode of “*Well, Actually...*”, a podcast by me, Margo Blackstone here at the Indie Birth Association. And today I will be talking with another lovely guest named Lindsey, and we will be talking about birth businessy stuff as part of a series I’ve been doing recently exploring the world of birth business and all the many facets and variations that exist. So true to form, we have another sort of unique situation we’re going to be talking about and talking through. Going to be offering some questions and thoughts and insight as much as possible to assist Lindsey here in figuring out some stuff with her birth business and birth work. This is a really neglected area out in the birth world. A lot of doulas and midwives are just really, really scraping by and don’t have a lot of strategy in terms of how they approach this work. And I’m trying to help correct that by putting out some of these podcast and then also doing some birth business and leadership consulting here at Indie Birth which we’ll have more info about soon. Or at this point, if you’re listening in the future, maybe it’s already there on our website, so you can go check that out at indiebirth.org. But I, without further ado, would love to welcome Lindsey to the podcast today and ask her to just give you a little peak into who she is and what she’s bringing to the world of birth.

LINDSEY: Thanks, Margo. So yeah. My name is Lindsey. I am currently a doula and an apprentice midwife. And I also host monthly women’s circles in my community and teach prenatal yoga. I am trying to dive into my midwifery apprenticeship while also continuing to have doula clients and trying to figure out that balance as well as trying to attract clients that fit, I guess, the mold of who I’m looking to work with. I’m really interested in mostly working with home birth families. And yeah. That’s a little bit about me.

MARGO: Cool. So that, I think, is such a unique place to find yourself in. And I haven’t talked with anyone on this series yet who is in your shoes of both apprenticing to become a midwife and wanting to also attend births as a doula. I have certainly—I have personal experience with that as well as working with my own apprentice over the last few years who also was doing that. So hopefully, I’ll have some insight to share. And I

bet there are people listening who also are finding themselves in a similar spot. So I guess tell me a little bit—because I don't actually know where you're at in terms of the apprenticeship. Have you started it already? Or is it starting soon? Or what does that look like?

LINDSEY: We've attended one birth together. And so it's officially started, it feels like. I'm attending prenats every Saturday and going to home visits, and we have six births between now and the end of April. And I feel like that's when it's really going to pick up or feel more like a real apprenticeship. So yes. It's very beginning stages working on learning things like taking blood pressure and the basics of prenatal care as we work towards attending more births together.

MARGO: Awesome. And so tell me a little bit about how you envision the doula work fitting in right now? How are you sort of thinking about it? I think you had mentioned to me that you're sort of approaching it as a way to continue making money while also apprenticing. Is that accurate?

LINDSEY: Yeah. I love birth. And I love working with families. I love the intimate connection that comes with being a doula. And I feel like as an apprentice I'm more observing and in the background. And I love the support and really, like I said, getting to know the families. And I feel like as a doula I'm more of a friend than a care provider. And I like that role. I also am not making money as an apprentice. And so money is a thing. And I'd love to continue making money during my apprenticeship while also having the opportunity to witness and hold space for families birthing in the process.

MARGO: Cool.

LINDSEY: I don't know if that really answered your question.

MARGO: It does. And I think it brings up two distinct conversations that are both worth having. One, which is a little bit more philosophical and maybe we'll save for second, is how to bring—or how do we blend the doula role with both being an apprentice and with being a midwife because I don't think they're mutually exclusive. Or they don't have to be. It's a little different when you're an apprentice since you're kind of under the guidance of a midwife. But it's a conversation that you could certainly have with your preceptor. I know I often felt like I was filling the doula role with clients as an apprentice. But that was—that might not be the case for everyone and in every apprenticeship it might look different. So I think that's a cool conversation. Not that it ever would necessarily feel exactly like they were your doula clients since you are still there to support the midwife too. But I wonder if there's other ways to bring in some of the aspects that you really do love about being a doula, so you don't have to go without them for your whole apprenticeship.

LINDSEY: Mm-hmm. Totally.

MARGO: So that's a (cross talk) conversation. And then the other is—okay. And I think we briefly talked about this by email. You're mostly wanting to attend home births. And you're apprenticing with this midwife, but you're not wanting—right. It's not going to work to have someone hire you as their doula and also be the apprentice at the same time. That's not a thing. So tell me more—

LINDSEY: That would be great if it was a thing.

MARGO: Right. Tell me more about what other home births are happening near you. Are there other midwives? What does that look like?

LINDSEY: Before starting this apprenticeship, I had attended births with two other home birth midwives in the area. And I started attending a local midwife association meeting for my state which they meet quarterly. So I've had the opportunity to meet other home birth midwives. I'm trying to get my name out there. I feel like I've kind of maybe been put in a category of apprentice. And I guess I want to still be in their category as a doula. And something that I'm just kind of thinking about right now is I don't know how my preceptor would feel about me attending births with other midwives. I don't know if that's a thing even in the doula capacity. So yeah. There are—I'm trying to think. One—there's at least four or five other home birth midwives that are within a two-hour drive of where I'm located.

MARGO: Okay. Cool. So it sounds like there's plenty of opportunity to be—wanting to be narrow with the home birth doula scope. So that's cool. And I think—I'd be curious—so yeah. So now, again, two more conversations. One is—yeah. How does the midwife you're working with feel about you taking on doula clients? I can speak to how I feel about it as a preceptor and then also how to have those conversations and develop those relationships with the other midwife, if that is something that is on the table and as an option. And I guess the third conversation is what to—how to balance the two? Which gets priority, if you get called to two births and one is a doula client and one is an apprenticeship client? So which of those would you like to start with?

LINDSEY: Well, I'd love to hear your perspective as a preceptor, and then the priority question I think is a really important one because I feel like I'd be more attached to my doula client because you get—you take all this time getting to know them intimately. And I know that I have told my preceptor that I'm here for her. And I know that she needs me. And that would be a really hard situation to find myself in. So yeah. I'd love your thoughts on both of those.

MARGO: Okay. I will totally give you my thoughts on both of those. Are there any other doulas close to you who could possibly be your back up? And are there any other midwifery students who could possibly be a back up is my first question?

LINDSEY: My preceptor has one other apprentice/assistant. I'm not actually sure if she is still following the apprenticeship, or if she's just decided she wants to be an assistant. My preceptor feels like she needs a team of two people with her at a birth. So her and then the assistant and then the apprentice or two apprentices. In that sense, I feel like she always talks about how she wants of layers of support. And so if one of us couldn't be there, then the other person would be there. At the last birth we were at—and it could have just been the nature of the birth, but it felt like it was all hands on deck. And all three of us were needed in various roles. But I feel like that would be an option if I talked to her about it. As far as other doulas, there is one other doula. It would depend on where the mother's birth was taking place. I have a really close friend that lives 30 minutes away from me, and I think that she could be somebody that would be on call for me, if needed. And she's also a doula or was a doula. She was my doula, so I know that she's awesome. She just has three kids and is figuring out what that life looks like for her. So yeah. Just lining up different people and then decided I guess which one would be the priority to have somebody be my backup at the apprenticeship or somebody be my backup at the doula birth.

MARGO: Mm-hmm. Yeah. So my thoughts—and what I've seen work well has been to prioritize apprenticeship clients because ultimately if the goal is to become a midwife each of those births really is crucial in working that direction. So even though doula births are awesome and—okay. So it's taking a step back. If your midwife that you're working with is taking about two births a month, even if you had a doula client every month, the likelihood of them overlapping is pretty small. Like per birth, right? So this is all just to be quadruply clear with everyone. In the event that this unlikely thing happens here's what we would do. So as a doula at a home birth, yes. You're getting to know people. But in my experience having the doula swapped out is less jarring typically than having, for example, a midwife not be there and having a backup midwife come. Not to say that doulas are less important at all. But just that role can just—is—and it depends. It depends on the doula. It depends on the mom. It depends on the relationship, all of those things. But I think the other part is setting the expectation from the beginning.

So I guess what I'm saying is in my experience both as a student midwife myself and then now having midwifery students being preceptor what worked really well with my first apprentice was—she would meet with doula clients. She was mostly either doing home births or she was doing unmedicated hospital births. And she was very clear from the interview, if you're in labor when one of my midwifery apprenticeship clients is in labor, you'll get my backup. And she never had anybody who was opposed to that. And

it never—I don't think it ever came up. I don't think it ever had to happen. But that felt good to me as the preceptor.

LINDSEY: Do you know if she introduced her doula backup? Or was just like, “This is the person”? Or did she have one designated person?

MARGO: She had one designated. Mm-hmm. And I think she even had a backup for the backup. We have a pretty rich network of doulas here, and many of them are very like minded. And so yeah. So that was, I think, a thing that felt good to people. And just knowing that from day one the expectation was just set. This probably isn't going to happen, but if it does, you'll get this other really cool person.

LINDSEY: Amazing person. Yeah. And layers—I love—my preceptor always talks about layers of support for the mama and for the birth team. And I think that—yeah. That applies to doula—doulaing as well.

MARGO: But that said, I think—oh sorry. The lag is real here. But I was just going to say that it's a conversation to have with the preceptor that you're working with too because if she has an assistant who is pretty rock solid and is okay with that possibility of you being at a doula birth, you'll just have to weigh out. Is earning that money more or less important than getting that particular birth experience? And for me, I was in also a low volume student setting. So we were only doing a birth or two a month. And for me, it felt like every—if I were to miss a birth with Maryn, that would put me another month behind schedule is how it felt. And for me, that month was worth more—saving that time was worth more than a doula client could ever pay me. You know what I mean?

LINDSEY: Totally.

MARGO: But that's an individual judgment.

LINDSEY: How did—well, how did you feel or how did Maryn feel if you attended births with another midwife in a doula capacity?

MARGO: Yeah. Let's see. I don't think that that ever happened for me. My apprentice attended other births in the apprentice role with other midwives. And for me, I actually really think that it's a great idea. I think it's really awesome to see how other people do things. If you're at a birth as a doula—a home birth as a doula, you're—you will be in the doula role, but you still will be learning, right? Birth is birth. We don't—you maybe aren't going to be doing some of the skills, but you're still learning the observation skills. You're still watching what the midwife is doing. You'll still, I'm sure, have a conversation with her and be learning from those births as a student midwife too. So that would be super valuable I think. And I think the only time things like that get weird is when we

have weird competitiveness in the midwifery community. And I'm really thankful that I've pretty well insulated myself from any of that.

LINDSEY: Mm-hmm.

MARGO: So I don't quite know what that would look like, but it might be important to—yeah. To figure out what some of those relationships are like.

LINDSEY: I guess where I'm going with that also is reviewing after the birth. If I wanted to discuss something that happened or process something that happened, do I reach out to my preceptor? Do I reach out to the midwife who was there? I don't know. I feel like some of the lines get blurred. Yeah. I don't know if you have any insight on that. I'm a processor. I really like to process things whether I'm journaling or talking to somebody about it. And I really would prefer to process things with somebody who cares and understands birth. Yeah.

MARGO: Yeah. I think in my experience with all of the people in the birth world—yes. We have confidentiality like you're not going to tell people their name and social security number and health history necessarily or every detail of their life. But in general, birth workers do talk to each other about births they've been to. And sometimes that looks like saying, "Hey, I was at this recent birth." I mean we're always kind of negotiating the line of is it okay to talk about births we've been at even anonymously on social media. Is that okay? Or do we need explicit permission? So I tend to err on the side of not sharing a ton especially publically. But there are definitely midwives out there who are like, "Hey, I just got home from a birth and blah, blah, blah, blah, blah." And they'll talk about it without any identifying details. So I don't know how I feel about that necessarily. But if you go to a birth as a doula, I guess that's where does any—is there any midwife relationship funniness in your community is the question to ask your preceptor. And just navigating that as best you can.

LINDSEY: Just straight up ask that. Okay. Yeah.

MARGO: Yeah. I would just ask her like how would you feel about me going to births with these people. Is that going to be—oh sorry. This darn internet lag.

LINDSEY: Okay. So kind of bouncing off of that, how many—I mean maybe not even bouncing off of that. But how many apprentices do you work with at a time?

MARGO: I currently work with one at a time. But if my load were to get bigger, which probably will happen, and when my little guy gets a little bit older and is easier to leave, I think it's reasonable to think I would be perhaps working with two at a time. And either having both of them attend births or I like that layers of support phrase. Or planning to have both of them at births, but if one of them can't make it for some reason or needs to

swap out or if we—I could envision with first time moms having one join me earlier on and then the other come kind of relieve us if it's long. But at the moment, I work with just one at a time. But now my first apprentice has gone on to be a midwife, so I do feel like I have a really, really strong backup and could call upon her also if I needed in the moment. And she's available.

LINDSEY: Totally. As your load, I guess if it does get bigger and you do have two apprentices at a birth, do you think that that would ever feel like too much? I mean I had one apprentice and a doula and my best friend and my husband at my home birth in my small house. And I didn't notice how crowded it felt, but my husband definitely later was like, "Everybody was in our hallway. Was that okay?" And—because our—yeah. The way our bedroom was set up it was really small. And so is our bathroom. And I guess I'm in my head about that too because I want everybody to have a really amazing birth experience. And I know each person that's there adds another layer of subtle energy. So I'd be curious to know what you thought about that.

MARGO: I think I used to feel really strongly that really we didn't need more than two people at a birth. But now I could see that there are definitely births where more would be better especially if there was fresh energy at longer births. And that even just—so it's funny you ask that. So as my new apprentice was coming in in September, my previous apprentice was with for the first two births. And so there were three of us. There was me, the graduating apprentice, and the brand new apprentice. And afterwards, I was like, "Wow. That was sure nice." It just felt like the load was more manageable. And it was harder—it was easier to stay in a good place and not get—start feeding off of each other being tired or something.

LINDSEY: Totally.

MARGO: So yeah. So I think that—I think instead of a number of people it's more about the energy that they do bring. So if there were two super high energy kind of cheerleader types along with a midwife that might feel really bad although some people might love it. So I think it (cross talk) need to be assessed.

LINDSEY: It depends on the person.

MARGO: Yeah. It would depend on the person. But I think, in general, two apprentices would not be weird especially if you stagger their arrival or if the house is big enough that people can kind of be in another space just at the ready instead of staring at anyone.

LINDSEY: Yeah. And kind of, I guess, going back to one of the first questions that we talked about and blending doula stuff with midwifery stuff, I think that's something where I totally believe that that can happen and that maybe it's just more multitasking, I guess,

at the birth in your head. But I felt like at the birth I was at, my first birth as an apprentice, it was just I was in full observation mode and trying to watch the more senior person do everything that they were doing and trying—I didn't want to be taking notes in my notebook but also trying to just absorb it all. And I'm sure that that gets less overwhelming as you continue down the apprenticeship. But I just—I got home and could not imagine myself doing both. And I saw the midwife do both. I saw her tend to her—tend to the mama in a very loving, nurturing way and then also get back into her midwife brain as she needed. She's been doing it for 26 years. So I believe that that's possible. I guess it's just hard for me to see that right now in myself. Or how to be both.

MARGO: Yeah.

LINDSEY: And I know you said at the beginning of your first—or your apprenticeship, you were kind of more in the doula role at the beginning anyways.

MARGO: Let's see. How would I kind of describe that? I mean I think it's a fair assumption that the first ten births you attend as an apprentice midwife you—Maryn always jokes. You just kind of cry in the corner. That's the first ten.

LINDSEY: Yes.

MARGO: Is you're just like awestruck and like, "Whoa. This is a lot," and you're just kind of soaking it in. So yeah. I didn't—I had moments of feeling like I was in the doula role. But mostly, I agree. It was just like I would clean up and make eggs and take notes. But then—yeah. As that part kind of wears off, just kind of the—as you start being able to integrate it in the moment more, then I think that's where you can start doing more of the doula support mixed with—you'll start doing the same thing you saw her do which is mixing the two together and knowing when you can just kind of be in that full on doula role mode and when you need to pop out and take some notes or ask the midwife questions or do more of the midwifery kind of stuff.

LINDSEY: Charting. I love that you said ten births because—yeah. The first one I was like, "Oh my god," because I've been to births as a doula before. But I was so in that role. And I've had my own home birth. So I don't know why I was so amazed when I was just there to watch it happen how much is actually going on all around, and it's amazing that it feels so seamless when you're the person—or from my experience when I was the birthing person or at a home birth in the doula role. I really—until I opened my eyes as an apprentice kind of missed how much happens on the sidelines, I guess. Or what's happening in the background.

MARGO: Yeah. I know. It's one of those things where it's like it's—and then once you're a midwife, you also look back fondly on the apprenticeship days being like, "Oh, things were so much simpler then. I just got to observe. It was so lovely." And then yeah. In the

doula role, it's really—sometimes I think it's really cool. I mean obviously I don't want transports for my clients. But when it happens and needs to happen, it can be really neat to be kind of in that more doula role myself in the hospital setting to be like, "Oh, I can,"—I don't know. You just get to participate in such a different way. And there's—it's more stressful in some ways but way less stressful in other ways.

LINDSEY: Totally.

MARGO: Yeah. It's just super interesting. What a good conversation.

(music)

FEMALE VOICE: Hello, everyone. If you're enjoying this podcast, you probably really enjoy our other more in depth offerings. We have a comprehensive course for mamas called *13 Moons*, epic education for the birthing year. And an everything you need to know course for aspiring doulas who want to change the world called *The Birth Warrior Project: 120 Day Doula Training and Transformation*. And for the real birth nerds who want to become home birth midwives, we have the Indie Birth Midwifery School, and you can find out about all of these options and more at indiebirth.org. That's indiebirth.org.

(music)

LINDSEY: So this isn't—well, I have two questions that are business. One is business related and one is maybe not so business related. The first one is any suggestions if I'm taking on less doula clients as other potential sources of—a little side cash. I used to teach prenatal yoga. In my community right now, it's pretty much only accepted virtually, and I wasn't getting—it used to be a good source of income for me. And the virtual format—just not as many women were interested in it, and I don't super enjoy that format. So I guess I'm just trying to pick my brain for other ways to be in the birth world and also being able to generate some income that's also putting my name out there because when I was teaching prenatal yoga it was pretty easy to get clients because everybody was coming to my yoga class. And then I got to them and be like, "Yeah. I like you. Yes. We vibe. I know that we vibe because I've spent time with you."

MARGO: Yeah.

LINDSEY: So there's that question. Let's start with that, and I'll remember my other question.

MARGO: Okay. Cool. So I will answer this. We also talk about it pretty extensively in our new *Intro to Midwifery* course and, to an extent, also in the Indie Birth Midwifery School in our apprenticeship course that we have as part of the overall program. But my briefish thoughts are placenta encapsulation is a big one that people do as apprentices to bring in some side income. That might be something to ask the midwife you're

apprenticing with. Does she offer that to her clients, or is there someone else she's been referring them to? And could she refer them to you instead? I know that that's a thing. My apprentice would offer it for a price to the community and then would offer a cheaper price to my clients. And so many of them would ask at a prenatal or I'd bring it up. And they'd say, "Oh, yeah. I am wanting to encapsulate this time. Do you know someone who does it?" And I'd be like, "She does it." So she was charging something probably way too affordable to my clients. But she didn't have to drive to pick it up, and she was going to see them for postpartum anyways. So I guess her thought was like it saved some time and gas or whatever. But that's one thing.

And then teaching classes, I think, is the other huge one. And that might not necessarily be a huge side income itself. But I sound like such a broken record especially on these recent podcasts with people like teaching *The Labor Blueprint*, the free workshop, or some variation that you come up with either online or virtually or in person. That's what I meant to say. Sorry. Online or in person. Really can maybe fill that space where you were getting interaction with the prenatal yoga. Also I think you should totally just teach prenatal yoga if you want to teach it in person.

LINDSEY: I just need to find somewhere that will let me do it. I need a—

MARGO: Let you.

LINDSEY: Yeah. A space.

MARGO: Space.

LINDSEY: I mean when it's nice out I have a beautiful pergola in my backyard, and that's actually where I started teaching prenatal yoga when I was having imposter syndrome four years ago like, "I'm not whatever. Good enough to teach this." So I started in my backyard, and I love teaching in my backyard. So that's my vision this summer is to have that again and knowing that the right people will show up because it's in person. And that would be a good way for me to meet people that I feel like are on the same page as me anyways.

MARGO: Totally. Totally.

LINDSEY: Yeah. And I love prenatal yoga. It's just a really fun—way less—kind of like what you were saying about when the transport happens and you're in the doula role again. I kind of feel that way about prenatal yoga where it's just a little bit more fluffy, I guess, than a birth class or a prenatal meeting. And I love that the mamas get to connect with each other. I think that's really important for pregnant mamas to meet other mamas that are pregnant at the same time.

MARGO: Totally. Yeah. So any and always that you enjoy bringing people together is huge. It's really just about establishing yourself as a community resource, someone who cares, and a leader in your birth community. And now you're in a new place. So you'll have to kind of start over in some of those ways, but you don't have to start over with your confidence that you've acquired which is great. And I think my—this kind of goes back to something I had touched on at the start, and I think would be a good conversation to have is how to connect with these other midwives if you're wanting to attend births as a doula for their clients. I would recommend—I guess first—I guess my first question is how much do you know about them and their practices and what they are offering, wanting, needing for their clients, and kind of their philosophy on doulas at home births. Do you know their stance?

LINDSEY: So there's kind of, I feel like, two groups of midwives in the state where I live. And I feel like both of them—both groups of midwives like working with doulas or like having doulas there especially for first time moms. In the city that I currently live in, there is a doula group that I'm not a part of because I just—we don't resonate. We're not looking for the same type of clients, and I feel like one midwife group always refers to that doula collective. So I kind of need to focus on the other group of midwives. I know—

MARGO: This is in your new city?

LINDSEY: So the way—where I live I feel like the midwives and doulas just drive all over the state. Everybody is driving two or three hours or willing to drive two or three hours. So all of the midwives kind of—it's kind of comingled, I guess. So I would be working—I could potentially work with any of these midwives in the city that I'm living now or the city that my husband and I are moving to this spring, if that makes sense.

MARGO: Got it.

LINDSEY: So yeah. The one group of midwives, I feel like kind of always refer to this collective of doulas that I'm not a part of. And then there's new group of midwives that I've kind of been introduced to through my preceptor that I didn't even really know they existed when I was having my home birth/couples years. So it feels like a whole new world. I don't know how they feel about doulas. I don't know why I haven't thought to ask that. I feel like when I have been at the midwives' association meetings I've felt like I was just listening and didn't need to be promoting myself. And maybe I need to do a little more of that or just letting people know that I am also a doula and not just an apprentice. But I think I need to talk to my preceptor first and figure out what our boundaries—what our boundaries are and then reaching out to the other midwives. I know that one of the groups of midwives—they already have two apprentices. So I don't

know how they'd feel about having a doula at a birth too—in addition to their apprentices. But yeah. That's kind of—

MARGO: That was going to be—oh, I was just going to say that that was going to be my suggestion is—yeah. Talk to the midwife you're apprenticing with first, get all of that really clear. I have a follow up question after this thought which is after that. So I've got kind of three pieces here. So yes. Talk to her. Get really clear about the boundaries, like you said. And then yeah. I think—I guess let's go there first. So what is your vision of what would be perfect for you in terms of client load for home birth for your apprenticeship? And then how many doula clients would you want? Does this make sense what I'm saying here? And now that you can necessarily control especially—not that we can control anything. But not that you're in charge of the load in your apprenticeship, but is two a month pretty typical for her you think?

LINDSEY: Yeah. I would say two a month is pretty typical for her. Two to three a month. She said that she's had more requests for home births than she's ever had ever this year. And so her load seems to be picking up, and I've noticed that at the midwives' association meeting that all of these midwives are experiencing the same increased interest in their services. So yeah. I mean I've thought about it. And I would love to have one doula client a month, if possible, or every other month. I feel like just that little bit of extra income would help, and I'd love—I just—yeah. I love birth. And at all the births I have attended with various midwives in the doula role, I've learned something, and they all do something a little bit differently. And so I think also now that we've talked about it, I think that's also kind of what I'm wanting more. Yes. I want to be the doula. And yes. I want the extra income. But as we've talked, I think I also really just enjoy seeing other people's perspective on the practice or how other people approach their work. How other people are approaching it. So I don't know if I answered your question because I kind of just like started my own question.

MARGO: No. You did. And I think that it's good to be clear about that going into the conversation with your preceptor. And then also as you're approaching these other midwives, I think there's a couple ways you could do it. One is you could say, "Hey, I,"—you could even approach, I think, the midwives who are referring to this other collective and just say, "Hey, I know it seems like you typically refer to this collective. I just wanted to make sure you knew that I'm available, and I specialize in home birth." I think that's an interesting approach. And also saying, "And I also really love witnessing and observing and learning from other midwives, so it would be really cool if we get to attend a birth at some point together." The other thing I would say is just that I would—I guess this is where I would encourage you to just clear about it. As clear as possible. Because you could also just approach those other midwives and say, "I'm in an apprenticeship with this midwife. But could I come to a couple births as a second apprentice with you

too?" If it turns out that you're actually just wanting to go to births and learn more from other people. Does that make sense?

LINDSEY: Mm-hmm. Totally.

MARGO: So there's kind of two ways that you could fill those needs that just wouldn't meet the financial piece. But I think a lot of midwives, myself included, at some point in time have thought, "Well, what's the point of having a doula?" Sometimes that starts at a home birth. So there was a stretch of time where I felt that way. And I don't think I'll ever feel that way again. But it might just be—just so you know, there might be that barrier there. And if they have apprentices already, just being ready to explain like, "I'm not there to—I'm there to make your guys' job easier essentially." And I think that the biggest hesitation the midwives have with having doulas at home births is they worry about the energy jiving between the doula and the midwife team, if that makes sense.

LINDSEY: Mm-hmm. Totally. And I think, hopefully, if they—if I introduce—I mean they all already know me. I feel like I just need to send an email that's like, "Hey, and I'm a doula. Consider me," because I haven't done that. And even when we've gone around at the midwives' association meetings and introduced ourselves, now that I'm thinking about it, I've always introduced myself as my preceptor's apprentice. I haven't said that I'm also doing doula work. I have attended birth as a doula with one of the other midwives that comes to these meetings. So she knows that I'm a doula. But that doesn't mean that she's thinking it, I guess, if that makes sense. Do you think that just sending a general email to the midwives' association that they all get would be good? Or should I just email them all individually?

MARGO: Hmm. Good question. Maybe a mixture or sending it to all of them and then talking to them one on one. I think a lot of midwives get approached by doulas especially who are wanting home birth experience. Usually, it's not people like you that are saying that. But that is a thing that a lot of us get is, "Hey, I want some more home birth experience. I'd love if you refer your clients to me." So I think meeting one on one to help them understand why you're different than sort of that usual typical request would be good. But email could also be good. So I guess I would email them individually, and I'd also ask if they want to get together some time especially as you're in a new area even though you are traveling all over. It could be cool to be like, "Hey, what are—can I pick your brain about what this community needs so that I can figure out how to best be helpful to the community and also to the midwives here," is how I would frame it.

LINDSEY: Yeah. Totally. I feel like at least, for me, when I was having home births I didn't realize how many options of midwives there were. It felt like there was only this one midwife group because that's who primarily serves the city that I live in right now.

And then actually after doing *The Birth Warrior Project* when the interview portion to interview a midwife, I started Googling. And then I was like, “Oh my god. There’s all these other midwives.” So I guess kind of I’m going with that too is letting families know that there are more midwives in our area than just maybe who first comes to mind and how to share that information as well. And I love what you said that—yeah. I do specialize in home birth. And that does set me apart because all the other doulas in my area they’ll attend any birth setting. And I am not interested in that. And I think it’s taken me a long time to feel okay with saying that because I think I felt like before that that meant I was judging the choices of other women. And I’m not judging their choices. I just know myself that that’s not what I’m interested in supporting. So I’m glad that I have clarity—that I have clarity on that and not feeling ashamed that I do just want to support home birth because that is what I want to do.

MARGO: It’s just the truth of the matter.

LINDSEY: It is the truth of the matter. You can’t get away from it, right?

MARGO: Right.

LINDSEY: Cool. I had another question, but now it’s kind of escaped me. Okay. This is a question that is more about apprenticeship and my relationship with the preceptor. And it’s two fold. So if your apprentice has a concern about something regarding a client or something came up in a prenatal that she wants to share with you, obviously, not doing it at the prenatal waiting until afterwards, but are you—do you want the insight from your apprentice? If I get a weird vibe about somebody or something? Or do I just keep that to myself and let my preceptor make her own judgments, if that makes sense?

MARGO: Yeah. I think that’s a question for her. It’s tricky. And I think—I don’t know that there’s a blanket answer. In general, I guess—yeah. No. I mean yes. I think communication is good, and I think just even asking her like, “Do you want these insights?” Or I don’t know. That’s a tricky question.

LINDSEY: I think it’s a good one for me, like you said, to ask her.

MARGO: I think it’s up to everyone to just communicate.

LINDSEY: The best that they can. So kind of go—this is just a general, I feel like, birth question. Have you ever found yourself—or in a situation at a birth where the energy is weird, and you just need to ask somebody to leave? And how? I’m trying to figure out how to best—well, that is what I mean. If you’re in a situation and you feel like somebody is disrupting the energy of the birth—yeah. I guess I feel like it’s something I need to talk to my preceptor about because I’m thinking about something specifically in my head where there was somebody at a birth that I felt like I should have asked to

leave but I didn't because it wasn't my birth. And I was observing. And I feel like I kind of answered my own question that I just need to talk to my preceptor and figure out the best way to communicate stuff like that with her.

MARGO: Yeah. Such a good question. And I think it's hard. I definitely have been in situations where I felt like there were people who were not beneficial to be there. And sometimes we're able to kindly tell them we all need to go for a walk or something. Or we all need to give them some space. But it can be really hard, and sometimes it's the partner. And then you're like, "Well, she chose this partner. I can't,"—I don't know. It gets really tricky. So I think just finding really subtle ways of being like, "Do you feel like you need some space from all of us?" Or I don't know. That's usually my go to move. Not just when people feel like they are maybe not contributing positively to the environment. But sometimes women really do just need space from all of us, but that is sometimes a good move.

LINDSEY: Totally. To not be observed.

MARGO: Yeah. By anyone. So you can make it not personal. Like, "Oh, it's all of us. We all need to go."

LINDSEY: Totally. We're all going to go on a walk. We're all going to get a cup of tea now. My last question, I guess, that's coming up kind of going—bouncing back to the business side is do apprentices get paid at any point? Or is that something that is just dependent on the—I'm sure it's dependent on the preceptor. But I would love to hear your insight on that.

MARGO: Yeah. It varies wildly from preceptor to preceptor. I mean some places—some birth centers or preceptors charge apprentices to come to births. Some—and then some pay apprentices. And then some it's just an equal exchange. They don't get paid, and they don't have to pay, right? So the thing I've come up with is pretty loose. I often have a hard time remembering where I'm at in the process with someone. But I don't pay people for the first ten. And then I pay a small stipend that at least covers their gas and food, and I buy food for apprentices at births and stuff like that. And then I increase that amount each birth, or I try to when I remember. And I often have to be like, "What do I pay you lately?" But I increase it each birth to reflect that they're becoming more beneficial and helpful because that is the case until I reach the amount that I would pay an assist. Does that make sense? So first ten for free, and then the next 20, it's like a little more each time. And then I pay them the assist fee at the end. So because they are essentially there as my assist. And if they're in the primary role, I—then they're often doing a lot of the work of it. But I still have to be there and supervise and all those things. So I don't know. I don't know that there's a perfect method, but that's what I've come up with so far.

LINDSEY: Do you feel like there's a point where you felt like—

MARGO: Does that make sense?

LINDSEY: Yeah. No. It totally makes sense. I guess for me, right now, I feel like I would pay somebody to take me to a birth. And so it's crazy to think that, at some point, I'll feel, hopefully, like I am deserving of a token or whatever—an exchange of energy for my energy that I'm putting into it right now because—yeah. Right now I totally feel like at the beginning of my apprenticeship, I just want to be at as many births as possible.

MARGO: Yeah. At the end of my apprenticing years, I did pay to go to births at a birth center in Utah. I can't remember how much it was honestly. But it was a couple hundred a week, I think. Maybe it was—I can't remember. I want to say it was like \$400 a week or something.

LINDSEY: Were you in a primary role, or were you (cross talk)?

MARGO: I was in the primary role, but that brings up the whole—yeah. But that brings up a whole conversation about what does that actually mean when you're with a group of midwives who don't really know you and trust you. Like yeah. I was the primary. But there was—that trust wasn't there. And so when things did come up, I often didn't actually get to practice my skills in the way that I would have if I had been the primary at the same birth with Maryn, for example. So it was a valuable experience. And it was nice to get a lot of births in quickly and to work with a bunch of different midwives. But yeah.

LINDSEY: So you think it is important to work with a bunch of midwives? Or at least see—try to you?

MARGO: Oh yeah. I think it's useful. I mean I think it especially helps build confidence. That's how it felt for me, at least, was like, oh, I showed that I could hold my own is how I kind of have framed it other times that I've talked about it. That I could hold my own with—yeah. Yeah. Even more—with more medical midwives, I still could hang. And I—it just helped me feel confident like I wasn't missing anything major. And yeah.

LINDSEY: I'm glad that I'm not crazy for being like I'd pay to go to a birth. It's good to know that people actually do that. And how far—how long—

MARGO: People definitely do that.

LINDSEY: How long had you been working with Maryn before you went to Utah for—

MARGO: Uh-huh. I had been with her for five years.

LINDSEY: Okay. How long do your apprentices stick around? That was two questions at once.

MARGO: I mean my—yeah. My recommendation pretty much across the board is to attend about 50 births. And I, roughly, I think the—I'm not a CPM, and I don't actually support NARM. But I do think their general recommendations in terms of numbers make sense. So ten observes, 20 assists, and then 20 primaries. And so that's my recommendation for my apprentices too. And that can look a lot of different ways when combining doula work with maybe working with some other midwives as well. So it might not be 50 with me. But 50.

LINDSEY: But 50 by the time that your apprenticeship is kind of concluding.

MARGO: Yeah.

LINDSEY: Cool. Yeah. My preceptor is a CPM. And I don't know if that's the route I want to go down eventually, but I do like that NARM has a structure because that kind of helped—yeah. I guess quantify what to kind of expect or how the apprenticeship would—how the apprenticeship would look and—yeah. 50 births. Okay. And that's like 10 births a year, I guess, if you are going to do it in five years. Cool.

MARGO: Yeah. And I mean, like I said, we had some pretty slow years. So it wouldn't have taken five years in a—if it was two a month. That would be like two years or maybe three years. But where was I going with that? Maryn has a really great podcast called *A Midwife By the Numbers* or *A Midwife By the Heart*, I think, where she kind of talks about some of this and the numbers and quantifying it all. And then we also, like I said—I guess I'll just mention for people who might be interested. We do talk about apprenticeship pretty extensively in our *Intro to Midwifery* course and in the apprenticeship course in the Indie Birth Midwifery School. So these are things we often talk about on our weekly student calls which actually are happening right now. I think Gail Hart is talking to our students today for their weekly call which is cool. What's your question?

LINDSEY: Well, I'm interested in doing the Indie Birth Midwifery School. And I guess I'm kind of wondering—before I kind of—I feel like I stumbled upon this apprenticeship. I'm going to say I manifested my apprenticeship.

MARGO: Perfect. You did.

LINDSEY: I was going to do—I was planning to do the Indie Birth Midwifery School starting in July or that was my game plan before I started this apprenticeship. And do you have midwives in the school that are also apprenticing? And how does that jive, I guess?

MARGO: Yeah. We think that as long as your time allows and your energy allows and time management skills are up to snuff that it is ideal to do our school and program alongside an apprenticeship.

LINDSEY: At the same time.

MARGO: That it gives people—at the same time. Yeah. Ideally. We have a lot of people who either aren't in one right now and maybe have been in the past or have never done one at all. And they still get a lot out of the program, and it's fantastic for them. But it definitely seems to be the case that the people who are able to put into practice these ideas are able to just contextualize them and integrate them at a deeper level than people who don't have that actual hands on experience. And I also know a lot of the people who have had hands on experience—so we've had people who either did complete apprenticeship and were already practicing as midwives in our program, and we've also had people who have just—they're part way through an apprenticeship and then do the program. So we've also seen that those people without the structure of a program often were—even though they were getting a lot of the hands on skills were missing a lot of the nuance and the research and a lot of the internal self development that needs to go along with it. So for my apprentice—both of mine have been in the Indie Birth Midwifery School. It's a requirement for working with me. They—where am I going with this? We do prenatals once a week. And then we occasionally have other postpartum like throughout the week. And we have some driving here and there. But for the most part, I don't have time to be like, "Let's process all of the fears you're working through."

LINDSEY: Totally.

MARGO: I don't have time to do that as a preceptor. And it's amazing knowing they're getting that in the program. And so it ends up being this really cool balance. And Alisha was my first apprentice. And she's now on her own as a midwife. I mean not on her own on her own. I mean I'm here if she wants me. But she is off in the world doing her thing, I guess, is what I mean to say.

LINDSEY: You birthed her.

MARGO: And I think that it was—I've—yes. She's birthed herself, I suppose. I think she's a resounding success story in terms of she knows her stuff. She got the experience. She's confident. And she's also just a cool human in general, but I think that there is an element of the combination of the apprenticeship alongside this really, really comprehensive program has made an easier transition, I think, for her.

LINDSEY: Is it like *The Birth Warrior Project* where it's kind of self guided? For *The Birth Warrior Project*, it had a recommended week one you do this, week two you do

this, but you have four months to complete it. Or is it more structured than that? I can also look on your website if you don't want to get into—

MARGO: More structured than that.

LINDSEY: Okay.

MARGO: Yeah. I mean I can get into it for a second. And anyone, including yourself Lindsey and anyone who is listening, if you are curious about the Indie Birth Midwifery School, you should totally email us. We do regular discovery calls with interested students and kind of walk people through all of it. And we have a lot of really cool free resources too on the website, indiebirth.org/resources. There is a whole section that I'm still putting together, but it's already pretty comprehensive for people who want to be midwives. So it's more structured in that we have an actual—I mean it's similar. But we have units. And so units are anywhere from two to six weeks long. And you move through the unit as a cohort, and you have six weeks. Does that make sense?

LINDSEY: Yes.

MARGO: And you're doing—it depends on the unit. But some units are three classes at a time, and some are one at a time. And it looks a little different in the second year. In the second year right now is—we have it structured as one course at a time for three weeks. So you focus on one topic for three weeks. So it's more like focus and then deep, not that the first year courses aren't deep. But they're a little bit more, if you can imagine the first two years of college, where you're like—

LINDSEY: Totally. Your gen eds.

MARGO: - you're getting the lay of the land and foundational—yeah. Yeah. Exactly. And they're kind of—yeah. So right now, I'm trying to think what they're in right now. I know the very first unit—if you started in July, you would take—oh my gosh. I'm blanking. What would you be taking? I'm going to look it up for you. It's Midwifery HerStory, so it's a really cool course all about the HerStory of midwifery specifically in the U.S. And you also take the Speaking Your Truth course, which is taught by me. And it's all about content creation and starting to figure out how that fits in to what it is to be a birth worker and some self work stuff like your personal narrative and what is your story that you're bringing. And then a course called Listen: The Art and Science of Relationship Building in Midwifery. And so that one is all about holding space. We explore a book called *Nonviolent Communication*, talk about goal setting with clients, coaching skills, fears, all kinds of stuff, so those three you would be doing at the same time. And then you get—you do a two-week course called The Wise Woman Within. And just to give you a super brief overview, the third unit you take Hormonal Balance and Fertility, Birth Models Around the World, and The Heart of What We Do: Wise

Woman Prenatal Care. So maybe that gives you a little sense of—it's like you're in a class. You're in the set of classes with your cohort. You move through the six weeks. You move on. So yes. You can do it faster. You can't really do it slower. And we have final projects at the end of each course.

LINDSEY: Cool.

MARGO: That you submit for feedback. Yeah. It's really fun.

LINDSEY: Yeah. I like that you move through it with your cohort so that you get to know—you're all at the same place. Like I said, I like to process and talk about things, so there's—yeah. People that are in the same place as me. I think that's great.

MARGO: Yeah. We've been giving them, cohorts, animal names because it was getting too confusing now that we have two start dates. We can't say first years and second years anymore because we have a bunch of people in the first year and a bunch of people—so right now we have the Ravens, the Wolves, and the Snow Leopards.

LINDSEY: Oh my god.

MARGO: So I don't know what July's cohort will be called.

LINDSEY: Probably not the Snow Leopard, but I like that one a lot. Maybe the Lions. Lionesses. I don't know.

MARGO: Yeah. The Lionesses. Cool. Well, any other concluding questions, thoughts, things that you'd like to talk about? I feel like my family might be home to interrupt us soon.

LINDSEY: No. I mean I think we kind of touched on all of the things that I had in my head as well as other things that came up as we were talking, so I have a lot to kind of digest. And it was really helpful to have this conversation with you. So thank you.

MARGO: You're very welcome. And for others who are listening and wanting to explore all these ideas and then also concrete skills and tools and all the things related to either being a doula or a midwife, we have a couple really cool options for you to check out at indiebirth.org. Like I said, we also have *The Intro to Midwifery* course, which is new. And it's one of two options as far as prerequisites for the Indie Birth Midwifery School. For people who are wanting to be doulas, we have *The Birth Warrior Project*. Lindsey is an alumni of that course. And so if you're wanting to attend the Indie Birth Midwifery School, which you can learn more about at indiebirthmidwiferyschool.org, we have a prerequisite and that is to either take *The Birth Warrior Project* or *The Intro to Midwifery* course. Not both. One or the other. And they are both really great options. And we would love to chat with anyone who has questions. You can always email me, message

me, chat with us on the website, whatever. We've got a million ways to be contacted. And we love hearing from you. So thank you so much, Lindsey, for having a cool and interesting conversation around this intersection of being an apprentice and also wanting to continue your doula work.

LINDSEY: Yeah. Thank you so much. It was lovely to chat with you.

MARGO: Yeah. Likewise. All right.

FEMALE VOICE: If you enjoyed what you heard, please hit the subscribe button and give this podcast a five star review. For more enriching content and conversation around the primal, physiological process that is pregnancy, birth, and beyond please head over to indiebirth.org. And if you are in the Duluth area seeking prenatal and midwifery support, you can find Margo at duluthmiwife.com. Thank you so much for listening. Until next time.

(closing music)