

(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:** Greetings and happy Sunday. Today is Samhain. Halloween is the more common name. And I am getting a quickish podcast in before the very looked forward to trick-or-treating event with—let's see. How many children will be along? Probably nine. Nine out of ten. We'll see. We'll see how this goes here in Kentucky. Our kids have never been real—and I guess that should be in quotes—real trick-or-treating. Some places that's not a thing. So I don't know about you. But I grew up going to people's homes, right? In a neighborhood. And that was really fun. And in Arizona, we just didn't have that. Nobody does that there. So my kids have never done that. They've done some strange versions that I really never thought were that great. So happy to be here. And happy to do this neighborhood thing. See how that goes over.

Appropriate, I think, for the day, this almost Day of the Dead, right? Isn't Day of the Dead tomorrow? It's also Margo and mine—our friendaversary. How fun is that? So we are in a season of darkness. And images, of course, are associated with this time. Skeletons and scary stuff. For all the good reason, I think. The world is really so much more accessible right now, and maybe people are tired of me saying that. And I know there are people out there that just don't even know what I'm talking about or don't agree. And that's fine. But with the seasons changing and the veil super thin, I'd be curious what you're all noticing. We've had a couple of spirty things happening around our house which isn't that odd really. But we had—let's see. A really cool thing actually is this image that one of my children—older children—captured on their phone camera. This image of something. Some kind of thing, orb thing. And actually, there were two of them.

And the photo was taken by accident because why would you just point a camera at a room, right? But I don't know. Something went wrong. She thought the camera was pointed the other way. And she took this photo of over my daughter Amelia's bed. Now Amelia has been gone in Sedona for the last month. So there's not her same energy

over there obviously. I don't know what has taken up residence, but this really cool photo of—I don't know. I don't know what to call it. I guess you could call it a ghost. It doesn't have human form. But it has a form. And there is a smaller one next to it. And there's no way it's anything else in my mind because there weren't lights on. I mean it's not a glare. It's not sunlight. It's completely only something that you would see through a camera lens. So that's my suspicion. There's lots going on right now. And there always is, at this time of year, as we head towards winter solstice. At least in this hemisphere. Towards the darkest day of the year. And I actually was sort of considering doing a podcast today on Scorpio season as far as my own births because—let's see. I have one, two, three—three babies born during Scorpio season, which we're in. And one baby, Sable, who left during Scorpio season.

So that was almost my topic, but nah. I'm going to share a reader question today around the topic of death because I think it's great timing. It really is. And I appreciate when people write with some cool ideas that keep me inspired and keep me thinking. So I will probably do some birth reviews of Scorpio season here. My one daughter, Talula, was 15 the other day. I don't know what I'll say about her birth. Maybe not too much only because it was really great. It was a great birth. Maybe I'll say it now. That was our third baby. Second home birth. I was a midwifery apprentice at the time. And she was also—not also. She was born in Indiana, which isn't far from here. So that was a really cool birth because—let's see. My first was a hospital birth. And my second was our first home birth, but it was a pretty painful experience. He was posterior. So if you know what that means, just the baby—kind of spine to spine with the baby with my son, Egan.

And Talula, who just had the birthday—she was my first labor where I realized why women could find any joy or pleasure in this experience. It was my first baby that was anterior so facing the right way. Go, Talula. She was easy, in a sense. I remember the labor being very pleasant because I didn't feel it at all in my back. And I thought, "Oh my gosh. This is why women can enjoy this. This is how they do it." And I really did. I kid you not. I remember smiling through her labor. I really, truly do. And it's really hard to believe she's 15. She was such a darling little baby. They all are. But she was exceptionally chubby with an exceptional amount of hair. And so just as adorable as can be. And she's still adorable. She's still got a lot of hair. And now she's 15 and way bigger and taller than me which is very odd. So that's that birth review.

Rumi's—I'm going to save. He's going to be one soon. And I feel like I will dedicate a podcast to that very unique experience although I do—or I will talk about it a little bit today when we talk about death in birth. Or the allusion or the feelings of death in birth. And then Amelia. Amelia will be 19 in November. She was my first Scorpio babe. And

my idea for that—we'll see if I can follow through here. We'll see if she's up for it. My idea it to have her on my podcast. I thought that would be so fun on her 19<sup>th</sup> birthday or thereabouts, and I don't know. She's a really cool kid. She's a woman now. And I would just love to have her here and see what comes out of her about her birth and—I don't know. Any of those experiences that she'll want to share. She was our planned hospital birth baby, our very first. And I don't have regrets about that, per se. But definitely her siblings have gotten a lot more attention around their births, right? The world has seen many of them be born. So I don't know. We'll see. We'll see if Amelia is up for it, but I thought that would be really fun. And it's something I meant to do last year or the year before. Just talk with her. Talk with her about her birth, kind of tell the birth story, and I don't know. That will be awkward for her. I have a feeling that. But we'll see.

So that's Scorpio season in a nutshell. And today's topic—I'm going to read the question. Oh, yeah. I am going to read the question. But before I kind of get to that part, quick personal update just because I was really amazed this week and touched and all of the things that so many people had a response, like a personal response, to the last podcast about the physicality of birth. For whatever reason, maybe the season we're in is helping us all feel more in touch or something with our physical bodies. I don't know. It's just a theory, right? So I talked about kind of being less in the clouds, more feet on the ground. And what we're experiencing in these actual human bodies is amazing. So I feel like there is more of that going on for whatever reason in birth, just in life. But so many of you wrote in to share your own experiences around something health related or this vision thing.

So so fun hearing from some of you. A couple of you, I think, are reading the book, and it was really fun to just—yeah. Hold space for that and read about people's experiences with this book called *Take Off Your Glasses and See*. Really great. I have now finished it. And yeah. Super inspired by all of you who are removing your glasses or contacts and sharing how that's going for you. So I thought I'd share here just briefly for those interested. It's going really well. I am almost at 2 weeks of not wearing glasses or contacts. And that's a really great feeling just in a simple way. Like I don't need to do that every night and every morning. So used to putting the contacts in, taking them out, making sure you have the contact fluid, blah, blah, blah. It's such a nice thing, and it's still new that I'm appreciative of it. Every night when I'm getting ready for bed. "Oh, right. I don't have to do that." And my eyes feel different obviously, I think, even if you've never worn contacts. There's a feeling, right? If you have something on your eyeball that goes with that. Sometimes they're kind of tired in a weird way. Or the contacts might feel dry or whatever it is.

So same with glasses. There's an actual sensation that I've found comes with wearing them that I never noticed before. So it kind of feels to me when I'm wearing glasses like I'm in a tunnel. And yeah. It's clear in front of me. But peripherally, it's not. And it's a very strange, almost like I'm in a cage or a box feeling. So I am happy to report that—well, on one hand to be totally honest, I'm not seeing completely clearly at far away yet. I think that's going to take some time and some more disbanding of my own belief systems honestly. I think it's mostly that. But on the positive side, I'm way more comfortable than I was. I'm not struggling to see. He talks in the book about that, in a way, how when we wear glasses or contacts we kind of demand to see. We put them in. We're like, "All right. I need to see now. I want to see this." And when we talk them out, it's really challenging to stay in that mindset even if you don't realize you were there because that's not going to work. Commanding and tensing up and stressing and not breathing makes it all much more difficult.

So a different approach is needed when you remove those things. It's more of an expansion feeling. And as he describes in the book, allowing the world to see you. So kind of changing this I'm seeing out. You must be clear. To like I'm just in it. Everything around me is also witnessing me, and it opens up this very multidimensional reality. And so it's amazing. It's just amazing. That's not even a great word to use. It's beyond amazing. It's stupendously fascinating that something as simple as removing a piece of plastic from your eyes which so many people wear. So it's super common. Nothing weird about it at all. Removing that could change your perception of the world. And I knew that. I mean I didn't know that. I didn't know that before I read this book. I didn't consciously think of it. So this book was so helpful.

But once I was onto it, like, "Oh, that's what's happening there," that's what's kept me going because it has been frustrating. I think there were times, at least once last week, where I had a massive headache. And I hadn't had any for the whole first week, so it was a little odd. But healing goes like that. It's not linear. And sometimes we kind of take a step forward and then back. The headache was awful though. And I almost gave up. I was like, "I just want to see. What am I doing? This is terrible." And when you're in that mindset, I think I said you just kind of snowball. And then you're living in a prison in your head. And you're fighting it. And then you're not breathing. And all of it works together, so that it's pretty unpleasant. So relaxing into this and realizing, "Wow. I literally am creating a new reality for myself by doing this." And that's amazing. Again, amazing.

I have been driving without the glasses, which I'm not saying to brag because I think he's pretty clear in the book too. Don't go doing that just to prove something to yourself or anyone else unless you really want to. But I've been doing it locally around town

where I know where things are already. And it's really been a learning experience to notice my emotions, at least initially, around that. So removing them, driving, and feeling really tense, really anxious, and working with that. Working with that and realizing, "Wow. That's always there. So my glasses are just covering that up. Why do I feel anxious? About what? And what about driving? Or what about any of this? What do I need to look at?" I did drive a little bit on the highway. But when I've been in new places or anywhere like that, I am still wearing them. So probably a couple minutes a day or some days not at all. But then yesterday, a lot because I had to go see some clients farther away, and I didn't even know where they lived. So that was an awkward day because, at this point, putting them on is not fun. And I feel the strain, and I feel like I'm in a tunnel. And I feel kind of dizzy almost. So I'm not even enjoying putting them on, but I have to at certain moments. Or at least that's my belief, right? I have to.

It definitely helps to see clearly in certain situations. So I found a new Whole Foods yesterday which was fun. It's been there. There was nothing to find. But I found it. And that was really nice to visit that store. But I didn't know the way it was set up. So I had to put them on just so I could see how the store was set up and all of that boring stuff. So definitely not 100%. I don't know that I have a projected timeline. I'm really attempting to not even do that to myself. I don't need to judge myself about it. I don't need to act like this is a competition even with myself. It's not. I'm enjoying it. I've learned so much. I've grown already so much. So I know it'll come in time. And back to the emotions, I do think that is the take home for me and probably many people that do this. Is just what are we feeling when we're not wearing these things? Because, as I said, those emotions are always there.

So I, to be honest, have been feeling more, overall, anxious. And I think that's due to this whole experiment because that must be anxiety I have in there that I've been kind of masking. And so my dreams have been more anxious. And I don't know. Just feeling that in general more. And not judging it. Not trying to make it go, right? Just sitting with it. In fact, last night I've been sleeping really well other than weird dreams. But last night, I woke up kind of before Rumi. So I'm sure many of you know what I mean. But he's been sleeping from, let's say, 8:00 p.m.—and he'll sleep to about 4:00 a.m. So he'll sleep 8 hours without nursing right next to me. Praise God. But at 4:00 a.m., he wants to nurse, and that's fine. I feel like 8 hours is plenty long. But I beat him to waking up lately because my timer is set to Rumi time.

So I was laying there just feeling so anxious. And what the heck? Why? Why wake up in the middle of the night basically and feel anxious. It's not a nice feeling. So my brain was trying to control it like, "Why? Why? Why? Why? Why?" And I don't know. Maybe it's just the state of the world. So I tried to let go of the why and just feel it. Just

feel it. Come on, anxiety. Let's see what you can do. How far is this going to go? And if you don't attach a story to it, it only can get to a certain point. So maybe some of you know what I mean. If you attach a story to it, then your brain will keep it going. And then you have that constant stream of adrenaline. But if you subtract the story and you just feel it in your body, it's like you hit a wall. And it can't. It's like rain. Like once you're wet, you're wet. Once you're anxious, you're anxious. It doesn't rise. It just simply is. And it's like you're staring it in the face. And then it just kind of melts away. So that's how I fell back asleep this morning, but I do have this whole vision experiment to thank for that.

And it's not comfortable. I think that's growth. For many of us, for all of us, that's the healing process in all the ways. It's not always fun. It's not simple. It's not unicorns and rainbows. It's just sort of sucks in a way. I mean in the best possible way. Being in a physical body and having the ability to feel things, right? It's a blessing and a curse. So quick drink of water here before we're off talking about the fear of death in the birth process, which is the actual topic today.

Okay. So I'm going to read this person's message. I'm not going to share her name because I'm not sure she wanted that. But I will read you her email. "I listened to your latest podcast on the physicality of birth and life. It really spoke to me. Thank you for sharing your deepest inner knowing, and I remember where you mention in the podcast that during your last birth or one of the last births that you had the thought that your body might really die. I'm so glad you shared this because it sparked something in me. This is something I've heard from women and friends in my community and also read about in birth books with stories from women all over the world that take a deeper dive into birth fears and feelings. I would love to hear you do a podcast about this." Oh, lucky you. "Like how is this fear normal? Where does it come from? How does it correspond to our biology? Is it really a socially conditioned fear? Or are the amazing hormones of birth a big player here or both? Or some other phenomenon that we haven't yet explored? I'm 23 weeks pregnant with my 5<sup>th</sup> baby and planning my 3<sup>rd</sup> homebirth. The fear of death that comes up in birth is something I'm exploring myself because I really want to figure out where it's rooted in me and my biology."

Hmm. Great question. And I think she sent me another email that just said more specifically, "Hey, I'm talking about the fear of death. Actually when you're in birth. Not prior to." So not a fear that surfaces in pregnancy. So great question. And I don't have the answer, per se. But I can share some thoughts, and I'm sure you all—many of you have your own experiences you'll email me with. So that will be fun. Or you can leave a comment on the blog. Okay. So great question. I think there is so much room there for personal interpretation, experiences. So my own experience. Hmm. Yeah. So the

birth she's referencing, as many of you know, is Rumi, and he was—is our 10<sup>th</sup> baby. And he will be 1 in about 9 days. Actually, 8 days. 8 days to be exact. So I will talk more about that probably.

But the short story and many of you have heard on other podcasts, is that the labor was kind of wonky. It was on again, off again for a day and a half. It completely stopped. And when it was on again, I was pushing. And that started nicely. I've always liked pushing a baby out. So for me, that's a really great moment because I know the end is near as well. And it started that way. And I remember smiling and breathing. I was in the bathroom. Margo was kind of hanging. And I was like, "Oh cool. I'm just going to breathe this baby out." Humbling. So no. It turned into a wild, animalistic, totally crazed, my body pushing with no control of my own which you would say, "Oh cool. That's how it's supposed to be." But no. Because he was in a very horrible position. He was head down, but his head was kind of cocked off to one side and also the, in hindsight assumption is, his neck was pretty extended. So he already has a large head, but this kid was trying to come through with an extended neck. So presenting more with his forehead rather than the tiny little top of their heads when they're flexed.

He may have also—who knows? Have had an arm up or a hand up or something that was theoretically preventing him from doing the normal flex and tuck. And I had never experienced that before in all of my births. It was horribly painful. It was just horribly, horribly painful to where—yes. I have shared numerous times I thought I was going to die. I did. My hips—I mean my butt, my back. It was like he was trying to fit into a place where he was not fitting, and that's exactly what was happening. So square peg, round hole. And it was scary. Not only was it more painful than anything, I think, I've ever experienced, it was unrelenting. And it was pure fear alongside of it because I knew he wasn't going to come out that way. And so for me, it was this combined experience of like, "Yeah. I could die doing this. I could die getting this baby out." And I'll talk more about that probably in a little bit. But that's what this person is referring to. And I had never felt that in any birth.

So I do want to talk more about that, kind of the pathological version in a sense of when things aren't right, aren't lined up, and maybe the more normal—the more normal I'm going to die. But for me, just sharing my own, I had never felt that. So in all of my births, even our miscarriage, I never felt that. Yes. Pain, at times. Yes, intense. Yes, like whoa. But never flash through my mind, "I am going to die doing this." So I don't know. It makes me think maybe I'm not the best person for this podcast actually because, as I shared, the person that sent this said she's heard from other women. And I don't know that I have really. I don't know that I've been at births where I can

remember anyone saying that out loud. So doesn't mean they weren't feeling it, right? Let's talk more about it all.

So a little bit more about Rumi, I guess, just for a moment is that the obvious probably is this was not a rational thought, right? Of course. I mean I guess I could have died. But now that I look back on it, I wasn't going to die. I wasn't in danger of dying probably. If he hadn't come out, he may have died. And, of course, that was, to me, a very real fear at the time. And I don't think it's any less real in a sense. A baby pounding trying to get out in a position that they just can't, at some point, will not do it anymore, right? So if I'm analytical about it, that's how I feel now. That he may have died. But I probably was going to be okay although that's not how it felt. So my saying that—and I said it out loud. And I remember saying it to Jason. And I can almost remember the look in my own face, if you can imagine what I mean. I remember just looking at him, like connecting with him, eye to eye, looking at him so seriously in between—in the minute I had in between contractions and saying to him, “I am going to die.” I needed him to know how serious this was. And Margo too.

So that was how I communicated that to them. And with more analyzation, which maybe isn't the best thing, I'm asking myself now, “Did I really think I would die?” And I think the answer is yes in my wild, animal brain. That was how it got computed, right? So take all the feelings, take all the emotion, take all the fears, and with someone in the birth process that's not thinking analytically, that's what came out. That's what my computer spit out is I'm going to die. But I remember thinking that in my head before I said it. The pain was so unbearable, and I couldn't relive it. And I couldn't get away from it. And I also couldn't get this baby out. It was a very—it felt very, very real. Very real that that was possible, if I didn't get him out. So that's a story. I think there are other experiences that probably fit into that category. And I said pathological, and I kind of mean it. There is a way that birth works. And you know what? 98% of the time it works just that way.

And sometimes in ways we don't even expect, right? Like a breech baby. That still works most of the time. With a head down baby, there is a certain way we think we understand birth to work. And as I mentioned, a head tucking or certain positions or the way the uterus works. So that's all normal. And I'll talk about that in a minute. But back to when it's not normal, I think there are probably many stories of women out there who would say what I just said. Something wasn't right. And that was how their bodies interpreted it. They thought, “I'm going to die.” And there's many more, in a sense, serious versions. So maybe it's a VBAC. Maybe there is an actual uterine rupture happening, and I don't know what that feels like. My understanding is it's extremely painful or can be. Not always, of course. Sort of like when birth goes wrong is the best



way I could say it. When birth goes wrong, we may get the message to our brain, and that's the way we interpret it whether or not great—whether or not death is actually a possibility or imminent. Well, I mean it's always a possibility. But whether or not death is imminent may not be the point. It's just we're in our animal brains. We're feeling something extremely painful or unusual, and our bodies are giving us the message that this has got to stop. And, again, uterine rupture is a great example and maybe a more—it's more simple, in a sense, right? You can't have a uterus rupture, and, usually, have a mom and baby that survive that in many situations.

So that's death in birth. And it's when things are supposed to feel different, but they don't. Interesting. I'm sure there are many people out there that maybe have stories along those lines. And maybe their interpretations are different because we all have different stories. But when birth isn't happening as it should, what are the other ways that that gets communicated? I think fear is a huge one. Fear can also be just part of a normal birth process for all the reasons. But, again, when things aren't going how they, sort of, are meant to, what is the message related to our brain? And how do we express that? On the other side of the pendulum, normal birth and what we consider to be normal sensations but, again, really hard to say that they're normal for everyone even if we're the midwife, whatever—our assessment is everything is normal, right? So normal position. There is nothing weird going on. There is nothing weird going on at all. And this woman is really experiencing it as pain.

So this is the physical version. I'm kind of on that again this week for a little while. Some women are going to experience birth as an extremely painful experience and sure. I would imagine that a lot of those women it is translated into I'm going to die. Or I think other phrases. And I have thought some of these, right? So breaking apart is something that I remember feeling. I didn't think I would not survive it. But there was an element of like, "I'm just going to break as this baby comes out." And I've heard women say stuff like that like, "How can this possibly happen?" And so for some of these people, maybe—just maybe this expression of I'm going to die isn't literal. It's just a way of verbalizing that which cannot be verbalized especially at those raw moments of being in our limbic brains. So it is perhaps part of the physiology to reach a breaking point, right?

So even if someone doesn't call labor painful, they may call it whatever words they want. Intense or whatever else. But there still may be kind of a breaking point when I always say—this is sort of my phrase. Shit gets real. And I mean that lovingly. So many births—first births, in particular, where things are just really calm and mellow. And I remember one birth awhile ago like that as they often are or start as. And the partner saying something like, "Oh, this is so great. Labor is so fun." And right. Maybe it is.

Maybe it isn't. But in the back of my mind, I said, "Oh, man. Let's just wait until he sees this." And when shit gets real, he'll kind of—he'll know in hindsight that—yeah. There's the nice part of birth and the I'm doing this. And things are so simple. And then for most women—and, again, this isn't everyone. Many women just plop out babies in the bathroom at a restaurant, right? We all know those stories. But for most women and most of the births I see, there is a moment at which shit gets very real. And the energy changes, and it escalates. And the adrenaline kicks in. And there are these words that might be said or these very heightened emotions that might be felt. And I guess that feels really normal to me. Feels really, really, really normal.

So I was pondering as I was deliberating this question right before, "Is there anything that helps?" So this listener had said, "Yeah. Women in my community. I've heard this. This is something women have talked about." I think she's right. I think you're right. I think this is something that is passed down in story. This idea of the pain and also the transformation. So the realness of it. And there is a lot of fear around just birth. So a lot of the pain is going to come. A lot of the fear is going to come from that. Women just not understanding. And so is education helpful? I think that's a great question to continually be asking. And I know I've said all kinds of things on this podcast like take our *13 Moons*. It's so helpful. It is. But then, right? There are women all over the world for as long as we have been birthing that don't need that. They don't want that. They don't have access to it. And they're going to have just great, easy births because they didn't think about it, because they didn't know anything.

So I don't know. I usually come back to something I've probably shared which is, in this culture, education is helpful because we are too much in our brains. And we are not living close to the land. We are not living the way we should. We're all doing too much indoors and driving cars and all of the things. So I do think education is helpful whether we like it or not. And I think when that piece isn't there I have seen that women can be overconfident. And sometimes people are overconfident even when the education piece is there. They just simply think that they'll be different, in a way. And yes. We are all different. So that's—it's a hard thing. It's a hard thing as a midwife, I feel like, to hold space for sometimes this idea that birth can be simultaneously easy and blissful, and I have experienced that. Right? So humbling. Because as you know, that was like my ninth birth. Oh my gosh. She literally fell out, and it was not painful at all. It was great. And then my next birth, here I am swearing to God I'm going to die.

So it's very humbling to not know what you're going to get. And as a midwife, it's holding space for both possibilities because actually it's not mine to wish. It's not mine to predict. It's not mine to say. And it doesn't even make sense to me to say, "Oh, I wish everybody could have a blissful, easy birth." I don't necessarily wish that because

I don't know what's needed. I don't know what's needed for that woman on the big level. I don't know what's needed for that baby. So I have to hold space. I think midwives in general should do—could hold space for all of the possibilities. But overconfidence can be something that does creep in. And again, it's not my job to shoot someone down prenatally and be like, "Oh, boy. You're overconfident. It's going to be hard." Not that at all. But also just the reality of yes. I'm glad you're feeling so strong. It's great that you have a high pain tolerance and just sharing different stories and different experiences like I don't know what yours will be.

But as has been shared many times, Margo had a really long first birth. That's a possibility. And I know that even more now in my heart, in my physical body from my own births. So who would think? Who would think you'd birth nine babies and then on your tenth one, it would be the hardest birth you've ever had, right? It doesn't make sense. But, again, it's not linear. It is not linear. And healing—and I do think this birth is part of our healing. Our individual healing, our collective healing, it's not linear, and the lessons come when they come. So we can't predict. But these big feelings can certainly be there. So back to the topic, these feelings of I'm going to die, who knows? Maybe they're more likely in people that really think or have been taught that a baby is just going to fall out because a lot of the time that doesn't happen especially with first births. So that's kind of my projection there. I don't know where the truth lies. But it's just a thought I had.

So back to the topic at hand more concretely, there is an actual hormonal, allegedly, and physical—maybe mental—who knows? Psychosocial. I don't know. Call it whatever you want. Reason why we might say these things and we might actually feel them in a normal birthing situation. And that reason, as many of you know, is called the fetal ejection reflex. This is fairly common information. So many of you are already attuned to this idea that hormone levels regulate a normal birth process. So this is why, at least in theory, we don't pain relief medication. We can manage our own pain. Oxytocin. All of the chemicals and hormones our bodies make are perfect for getting a baby out without anybody's help. And the adrenaline is the part that creates the fetal ejection reflex and also this feeling or verbalization of death. And, again, whether that's been in your story, I don't know. I don't know how common percentage wise it actually is. But that is what is taught, at least, alongside the fetal ejection reflex and Michel Odent and all of that.

So the point being adrenaline raises—I think it's 90%--during the course of a normal labor. So back story, you don't want a lot of adrenaline early in the birth process. I mean if that happens, okay. But you're going to be like any other mammal. You're going to shut it off most likely. You're going to feel scared. And your labor will stop.

And you'll wait. Your body will wait until you feel more safe, and there isn't adrenaline coursing through your system. It's not an appropriate part of the chemical process earlier. So as someone is going through the birth process, her body is opening. The baby starts shifting and coming down. There is a point at which the adrenaline becomes overwhelming so, again, 900% more. And that adrenaline is what shoots the baby out. Hence the ejection reflex so the baby is literally ejected by the uterus even if the woman were to be in a coma. So it's not something her brain is controlling ideally. And yeah. The other side of that is adrenaline and that coursing through the veins and however that's interpreted by that woman.

Adrenaline in normal life is associated with fight or flight, right? Fear. I mean it might be excitement too. But ultimately, there's an anxiety or a must run feeling around adrenaline coursing through our veins. We all know what that feels like. So again, I think it's up to that individual woman how that's interpreted. And it might be something like I'm going to die. And I know Michel Odent does teach that. So the woman, at that point in her birth process, he would say most often will get upright. So she might be resting comfortably in the birth pool, kind of snoring even between contractions, really getting a nice rest. And then in the most stereotypical picture, she rises. She's upright. Her pupils are wide and dilated. Her eyes are wide open, and she might say something like, "Oh my gosh. I'm going to die." Or something equally as serious and an expression of this adrenaline, an expression of this big thing happening which is a baby that is going to be ejected from her body probably momentarily. So death or a baby shooting out. I mean you can feel, I think, how those do go together, right? And even in a metaphysical way of death being represented by this ridiculously crazy event of a human body coming through your own, right? So we're not thinking that way. I haven't really, in my own births.

But I still think that way when I'm a midwife at births. I think this is amazing. How does this happen? And that's just watching it. That's just witnessing it. So when we're in it, I think there is something so out of the world, so outlandish, so beyond our comprehension, beyond our physical comprehension, beyond our emotional and spiritual comprehension that we are birthing a new life. We are birthing a new life. And I think we know. I think we do know even if we've never talked about it that at the deepest level of our own female consciousness we are dying. We are. And that isn't a death to be mourned, in a sense, although certainly that can happen. And I think it doesn't happen. And postpartum depression and all kinds of feelings coming in postpartum are largely due to the fact that we are new. We have created a new identity, and maybe the depression, at times, comes from the fact that we didn't realize, consciously, that something had died. So it's like, "Whoa. Where am I?" And I don't

care if you've had one baby or a hundred. You die every time. You are a new person afterwards.

So how much of that is metaphysical? How much of that is literal really on some level? And what is required of us to make sense of that information, right? It's huge. It's absolutely huge. So I guess I wouldn't doubt at all that women—many women in this process of birthing for whatever reason they do connect with that deep wisdom. And I think there is such beauty in that. I mean there is beauty in all of it. There is beauty in the mundane parts of birth too for sure. But there has always been something so beautiful to me when the image is painted of a woman leaving her body, in a sense. Her spirit going off to collect this new soul from the ethers and to bring that soul through her body again. So so many opportunities there for introspection and feeling and, again, sort of metaphysical and metaphorical interpretations of this life changing, life ending event. Yeah. So that's my little spiel on that. I think it's really not possible to wrap our minds, our bodies, around how it's happening or sometimes it's when it's happening. Sometimes women are totally caught off guard by this fetal ejection reflex and this baby coming out, and they're sort of not with the program.

So to try to make sense of it is awareness of the death as the death is happening. And if this isn't getting too confusing, I think there is awareness. There is awareness on the other side of the death especially if that is a topic kind of brought to the table for some. That that's why postpartum is hard. I mean it's hard for that reason. You are not the same person. You are not, and you're picking up the pieces has been my experience. So when I'm sitting there postpartum, I do not know who I am. And so many tears are shed. And so many journals are filled. And all of the things because it's like another version of being in between worlds, but your identity is absolutely shattered. And that is the death.

So is that not what many women are channeling? I think, again, in a normal birth experience, they're channeling the unbelievability of this and the awareness no matter how conscious it is of the death of self. So true. I think there is also something to be said for the phrases that might leave our lips during labor that are dramatic in a way that makes perfect sense if you're with a laboring woman. So I think there's also that possibility. And I don't mean to say like, "Oh, she didn't mean it." But sometimes things come out that are sort of ridiculous. And as the midwife, who cares? I'm just there to witness. So there's no comment or whatever. But I think you all know what I mean, right? Sometimes women say crazy stuff. And sometimes it's to someone. Or sometimes it's pure anger or rage or who knows what or fear. So I guess the process

itself lends itself to, again, the bigness. The bigness, the rawness of emotion and however that gets translated for that woman.

Another thought I had was that this death—because I think, for me, there was a death, and I've already shared that I think that happens every time. But I think in the case of Rumi's birth there was a more specific death. It wasn't just my new identity. It was a complete cracking of patterns and culture. And so maybe that's the culture at large. Maybe that was my own ancestral lineage healing. But in retelling his birth story to my mentor a year ago or little more than a—yeah. Little more than a year ago. She asked me. She said, "Where was the worst pain? Where did it actually feel like that's where death would get in?" And I answered, "My hips." And now that I've had distance from it, thankfully, it's hard to remember what I was even talking about. But because she had asked me when it was still so fresh, I know that this was accurate. It felt like—I never felt like pain like that. Like my hip bones were going to just blow apart. Yeah. It was really rough.

But anyway, she said, "Oh, well, that's interesting because that sensation that was unique for you—you've never had it in any births was a,"—let's see how to say it. Like a healing of a pattern in my history or, again, maybe the culture that we all live in breaking the need to control. And I find that really fascinating because this idea of control has been a theme for me ever since his birth. And it's been a theme my whole life I'm sure, but this is how it's coming up now. So this hip pain and feeling that and death associated was the death of that self that needed to control. And I know she's right because that was essentially what I came to after his birth as well which was control doesn't do a whole lot. And just superficially, right? In his birth. I need it to happen at home. I need it to happen in this room. I didn't know that I was so set on that from a control, an egotistical, must have my way, but I was. I was. And I needed to go through that to destroy that in myself. And so yeah. I think that did a very good job. But still the need to control is there a little bit. So I think I did a fairly good job of having that be destroyed, but also it's been coming up a lot lately still. And I think a year—the timeline is symbolic, right? Again, all the things I talked about in the beginning. But this need to control and now this vision thing and feeling out of control and realizing what I do control and what I don't, which sounds really elementary to me. But hey, just being honest.

There are things we control. And there are things we don't. And something like the weather, as silly as it sounds, is not something I control. So it's another lesson for me, and that must be one of my primary lessons this lifetime. So back to the subject, again, I think there are all of these possibilities that maybe depending where we feel this sensation or we have this thought of death in birth. Maybe that points to our own healing. Maybe that points to the ways we will become new and so yes. That death is

very real. And obviously, it's not real on the physical plane in the ways we talk about it in our normal, mainstream culture. But the versions of death, the ways that the old can be shattered, the old can be burned away, right? There's so many metaphors.

And that was—I'm sure—in many cultures for as long as people have been here. A core belief system that people embraced more than they do now. So this idea of death and destruction giving way to new life and new growth. That's it, right? That's the circle of life. That's the spiral. That's absolutely everything that is in our core especially as women. And so is this not just another version of that, right? We die in our menstrual cycles, do we not? We die each month. Something dies within us. The possibility of life. Whatever you want to say. Even the metaphorical. And all the ideas we had for that month. And old patterns. Or maybe emotions or relationships. Each month we have a chance to die to that. To die to the old and what is not serving us. And we know especially if we have normal cycles that we will be greeted with another chance. And there is no sadness in that, in a way. I mean yes. There might be the experience of regret or whatever in this case of cycling and fertility or whatever.

But my point being that there are so many ways that death can be accepted and not be seen as this end that it is. The state of the world, of course. Great example of everybody going to ridiculous degrees to protect their physical body from death as if death is the absolute end. And for many people, maybe it is, right? So they don't have these beliefs or whatever. This awareness. But that's how the world works. That's how the world works. I feel like Bo Burnham. That's how nature works. There is a cycle of death and renewal. So, again, death. Perfect time to be pondering these things right now. And the encouragement to do so if you so choose. Again, not death as a final thing. But this idea that things do change. Things do go away. We change. Parts of ourselves need to go, and we can help them in certain cases. But, of course, birth is one of—one of, not the only—one of the prime initiations, if a woman chooses, during her life. So why would it not come with this? Why? Right? Doesn't every initiation come with this? This ability to renew and die to the old.

I think it does. And in that way, it all makes perfect sense, right? Absolutely perfect sense. And maybe something that there should be more conversation around. And, again, not death from this western, mainstream perspective like we don't need to talk about death with pregnant women although—funny. The mainstream world sure is. I mean gosh. Get your vaccination, or you'll die. Not true, right? There's so much untruth there and also lack of subtlety and nuance, of course. But the mainstream world really doesn't have a problem threatening everybody with death at every turn. So it's our job, I think, as those that feel like we are holders perhaps of the older wisdom, the ancient wisdom, to bring these topics back and talk about them openly. This experience

perhaps of death before someone gets there may be helpful. I don't know. If it's certain people, I guess it could scare them. But I think there are many women such as the one who wrote this beautiful email who really want to figure it out and really want to be open to it and open to it and experience whatever is meant to be experienced.

All right, everybody. Thanks for listening to my almost hour blab. I'd love to see you tomorrow on Midwife Monday. It's [indiebirth.org/live](http://indiebirth.org/live). And the time is 3:00 p.m. Eastern every Monday. Have a great week.

(closing music)