

00:00:00 Speaker 1:

If you can share a little about how it felt, you shared that you had planned a home birth and it got moved to the hospital because of strep B stuff. [right] And I'm wondering if you can share a little about how that felt to you at the time. You know, we didn't really talk about that in the first conversation about, I don't know, you know, the mayb-, perhaps the disappointment or the, um, sort of reorientation that was required by the change of setting.

00:00:24 Tammy:

Yes. Um, so a couple things all happened at the same time, and I may have said the time I woke up to this kick was 4:44 am [S1 affirmative], I remembered it's coming up this summer, and I traditionally wake up at that time, and I had just seen my midwife the, the day before, so I, who said, "oh, it's gonna be at least a week or two." So I was really, really surprised, first of all, that I was going into labor because I wasn't expecting it yet, um, and they had prepared me very well saying, if your water breaks we're going to the hospital. It wasn't a choice. It wasn't, you know, let, let us help you understand this. And the midwives were really lovely, wonderful, compassionate women like yourself, who were well educated, also mothers. They knew how to talk with women about the options of what, you know, if this happens, this is what we do if this happens. You know? And I felt like both in our birthing classes and in my personal preparation appointments, that they had made it very clear. So I, I intellectually knew, okay, [S1 affirmative], that's one thing. Right. How did I feel about it? Well, of course I was really disappointed. [S1 affirmative].

00:01:55 Tammy:

So I had been living with the idea of homebirth would provide me with the atmosphere that I was comfortable and felt safe in. And I knew that the hospital situation wouldn't provide that. And my midwife [S1 affirmative] also knew that, and this is why, even though she was a lay midwife, she was the closest one on duty with me, who had been with me the night before. She said, I'll meet you there. And I think she intended to just meet me as a friend, as a supportive person at that point, that she felt like she couldn't be officially on duty. But as I mentioned, she ended up being on duty because they didn't, I said, this is my midwife. And they said, okay. And off we went. [S1 affirmative], um,

00:02:46 S1:

Off you went.

00:02:48 Tammy:

So I think at the time, I didn't process my emotions very much beyond the, this is what we need to do. We need to get, you know, we had a large boombox cassette player or CD player, I guess CDs were new at the time [laughter], you know, that could play the ocean music that I had been living with the last few months as preparation for calming, relaxing. We had to have that. And, you know, we had a, a stack of things to take just in case, so [S1 affirmative], so those things were already prepared. Um, probably the hardest things were in the moment, getting my husband awake, [laughter]. And, he's a very sound sleeper, at least he was then, and, and, um, getting us into the car, you know, we were all, we were just really surprised. My body's the one that showed that I wasn't happy because my labor completely stopped.

00:03:51 Tammy:

And at the time, I didn't, this was my first birth, and I had not attended a birth before, I'd only watched videos of births. So I wasn't aware that my body was saying, we're a little scared about this [laughter], and we're just gonna [S1 affirmative] stop until we both safe, you know? [S1 affirmative], and the labor stopped for so long that they were actually saying, you know, maybe it wasn't, you know, it's gonna be a while maybe tomorrow [S1 affirmative], or, you know, because I know that can happen [S1 affirmative]. So I was feeling disappointed, but also I, I realized later that once my midwife arrived, I felt safe. And then soon afterwards, um, the contractions started back up.

00:04:47 S1:

So you had contractions then, the water broke and contractions began, because sometimes water ruptures, and that's all that happens for that time. [yeah] But for you, contractions began.

00:04:57 Tammy:

They began, they perhaps had already [S1 affirmative] begun in my sleep, but were gentle enough [S1 affirmative] I didn't notice them. I mean, because they were [sure] fairly close together, so I can't remember. I had all that written down in that disappearing ink I told you about. [laughter].

00:05:15 S1:

So you've used this word a couple times, and understandably, this idea of safety and how you felt safe with a, the idea of a birth at home [Tammy affirmative] and not safe. I'm wondering, you know, safe is a word that everybody defines differently. Everyone sees safety differently. And I'm wondering if you can talk a little about what was, um, safe at home that wasn't gonna be safe in the hospital. Do you know what I mean? What was the change that, that moved it not just from a different place or less familiar, but actually to an unsafe place.

00:05:46 Tammy:

Right. Um, so I guess my first, I have first and underlying thoughts about that, my first [S1 affirmative] choices about that were, I did not want to be tempted to have a medicated birth. I wanted [S1 affirmative] to be sure that as few as possible medical procedures for myself and my child were given. And I knew that I would have a better opportunity of having that experience at home, at least in the 1990s [S1 affirmative] where I was living that was very true. You know? [S1 affirmative] That may or may not be the case now. Um, but that was my understanding from talking with friends and my sister, who, although younger, had a child first, and she was the one who said, "Hey, I'm gonna do a home birth." And my friends were doing it. So it seemed like the natural thing to do. You know, I, I did my reading [S1 affirmative]

00:06:53 Tammy:

and research and, and, um, that, that seemed really normal. So when the fear of the beta strep came in, you know, they're like, [S1 affirmative], we understand you don't want medical procedures, and this is what we, we will, in order to work with us, this is what you have to agree on if, and as I've said [S1 affirmative], the research now says, that was totally unnecessary. And I wonder, um, how my health and my daughter's health, we both struggle quite a bit, um, would've

been different [S1 affirmative]. There's also the underlying what were hospitals to me and my family [S1 affirmative], and they were mostly places where people were very sick, died, sometimes got good treatment, sometimes didn't. Um, it seemed like a place for sick people who needed care, not a birth, which to me doesn't seem like an illness.

00:08:03 S1:

So, so then you have to move there and your labor stops, and you have to get back into that place of feeling somewhat, at least somewhat safe for labor to start back up. It's a very true thing [Tammy affirmative] that emotions and that kind of disruption can certainly halt a labor. [right] And so I'm wondering, I'm curious if you remember the things that helped you get back to it, feeling a safe space, you know, and being able to get that labor going again because, um, you know, these days there'd be conversation of induction and things at a certain point, if you couldn't. And I don't know in the nineties how common induction was versus just sending you home, you know, and saying, come back when you're in labor. But I'm curious what you, um, what you found helped you get to a place to help that labor start back up.

00:08:50 Tammy:

I was aware there was conversation [S1 affirmative] that if the labor didn't start back up, that they would probably send me home. [S1 affirmative] If there was talk about induction, I don't recall it, and I think I would, because I think I would've been pretty, um, lion mama, "no," [laughter]. [S1 affirmative, yeah] So, yes. So, because I don't remember that it's possible they pulled my husband to the side and asked him, and he would've said absolutely not. At that time, we were really very clear on what we wanted together. And there were several times, which I hadn't mentioned before, that he did advocate during and after the birth for myself [S1 affirmative] and our daughter [S1 affirmative]. Um, so what, what helped me, um, I think I had to get used to the fact that I was there. I mean, as I mentioned, it took forever for us to get out of the admittance space.

00:09:49 Tammy:

We were there almost an hour. So it was, you know, from 4:44 to getting up into the room, were se- there were several hours, you know [S1 affirmative]. And, um, we got the music going of the waves [S1 affirmative], and of course that was calming. I was encouraged to walk. And, um, oh, well, they hooked me up to, to medical things too. So I had to get used to being tethered, um, [laughter] [S1 affirmative], so I couldn't walk as much as I wanted. Um, meditation was still pretty new to me, I may have done a little, or sang, there was actually a phone call. I hadn't even told you about this. I was supposed to play music at a friend's memorial service that day, [laughter] [oh, no] and this was before cell phones. And so we had been trying to contact, um, a friend of our friend who had died to say, "Tammy's in labor." And I remember saying, and this is before my labor had started back up, but here we are in the hospital room, calling our friend's friend who was organizing the memorial, saying, "I don't think I'm gonna make it. I'm in labor." And they're like, "You don't think [laughter]?" And I'm like, "Oh, yeah. I guess I'm not [laughter]." [yeah]

00:11:27 Tammy:

So, so we had to take care of that, that business. [S1 affirmative], which I had totally forgotten about until now. Now I mean, I remembered off and on, but I didn't remember it when we talked previously [S1 affirmative], and I really do think it was the midwife arriving, [S1 affirmative]. Um, you know, just knowing her, sh she had such a peaceful, calming, loving presence. I'm sure she probably massaged me, encouraged my husband to do so, and helped bring me probably back into myself. You know, I was probably pretty much out of, out of my body freaking out that I was there, and you know, so just helping me calm down. And I was aware that I hadn't been feeling well from the antibiotics already, and I really didn't want them, but they were like, your baby's gonna die or be really sick if you don't do this. So of course we do anything for our babies [laughter].

00:12:26 S1:

Of course, of course

00:12:29 Tammy:

So, um, so I think it was just a matter of time getting used to being there, taking care of the memorial service, communication [S1 affirmative] and the midwife arriving to help me recenter [S1 affirmative]. Yeah.

00:12:48 S1:

[S1 affirmative] That all makes sense. [Tammy affirmative]. I'm wondering for, um, just for the sake of the recording, if you can talk a little about why, why there was that, um, what was important about the difference between a lay midwife and a nurse midwife? And maybe you can speak to a little bit about what the concern was at that time in that, in that place, you know, different states have different rules. Um, if you can speak a little bit about what the concern was there between that distinction between those two.

00:13:14 Tammy:

In, in the 1990s, a lay midwife did most or all of their training by apprenticing with a very experienced midwife, usually in people's homes, because that was the only, they weren't allowed in hospitals legally. [S1 affirmative] And, um, at one time, I knew when they were and weren't even legal. I mean, there were like midwife hunts and midwives went to jail for practicing midwifery without, uh, an RN registered nurse degree, um [S1 affirmative]. So it was, um, they were risking their lives and careers, and we, we were somewhat too. Um, and I can't, I didn't feel at risk at all. Um, but I know, um, like with insurance and different things, fortunately, the lay midwives, um, worked with Midwives Care in Cincinnati, Ohio, and they worked with the, the registered nurse midwives who, as like assistants, so they could be their assistant, but they couldn't be their, uh, officially called a midwife, even though [S1 affirmative], they had all the skills they needed, um, and they carried a medicine bag, um, to the level they were allowed to the, the [S1 affirmative], the lay midwives did.

00:14:53 Tammy:

And then the RNs carried a slightly higher level medicine bag that they were allowed. And then there was another level of the assisting doctor, which they were required to have if there was a hospital birth. And they suggested that everybody meet that doctor in case of any complications, so that there was a working relationship. So midwives could not practice birth even as registered midwives in a hospital without a doctor present. At that time, there were not.

00:15:36 S1:

So the doctor had to be in the room as well.

00:15:37 Tammy:

The doctor had to be in the room as well. And officially he was on duty. As soon as we go to the hospital, he was on duty, or she, in this case, it was a, he, um, [or she, yeah]. And as I mentioned, he didn't know me. He didn't care. [laughter], he trusted the midwives, and he was talking about his golf scores, and I sent him out of the room. So he really was

00:16:00 S1:

[laughter]

00:16:03 Tammy:

And I believe towards the very last minutes before or after my birth, one of the registered midwives did come as well. But I have very little memory of that happening.

00:16:17 S1:

[S1 affirmative] Understandably.

00:16:19 Tammy:

Yeah. [laughter]. There were a lot [I mean] of people in and out in, in those last minutes [yeah] and I was busy.

00:16:27 S1:

You know, that I'm gonna ask you a little more about that dream you had, Tammy. In what way did it, um, communicate the message to you? Do you know what I mean?

00:16:38 Tammy:

Right. And I, I have been trying to recall the details, which I know I wrote down in the disappearing ink [laughter], but [oh my gosh] I, I may have mentioned that I've had long-term anemia, most of my [S1 affirmative] adult life. And some of the details of that dream I've lost, which make me really sad, I didn't think that could ever happen.

00:17:06 S1:

Hmm.

00:17:11 Tammy:

It does make me sad.

00:17:13 S1:

Yeah.

00:17:15 Tammy:

But, um, I think there are two parts to the dream, and, and one is what happened actually before the dream, which I wanted to mention, um, because you and I had a, had a conversation, um, also that, um, I, and I don't know if I shared this with you, but you, you had been sharing something, so I'm 99.9% sure I know exactly when conception happened [S1 affirmative] and [S1 affirmative] um, it was a, a sexual spiritual experience like I had never had with anybody with my partner [S1 affirmative]. Um, and it was like, wow, [laughter], you know, why isn't like this all the time? [laughter], you know, it's, it's like so powerfully, um, passionate and, um, spiritual and sensual and beautiful, really beautiful [S1 affirmative]. And so it was some, uh, uh, just a few weeks, well, it must have been at least close to a month after that time, but I don't think I missed a period yet that I had this dream. And I do occasionally have very vivid dreams, um

00:18:39 S1:

[S1 affirmative]

00:18:42 Tammy:

And in this dream, I remember being told that I was pregnant, and I cannot recall who told me I was pregnant. I can't remember how it was conveyed, but when I woke up, you know, I said, you're not gonna believe this I just had this crazy dream that I was pregnant. And isn't that weird? You know, that's no way it's possible because we started using condoms within a week after I stopped using birth control and blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. Just like we were told to do. And then of course, I did miss my period and started to feel some tenderness, and those little signs of, if you feel this, maybe you are pregnant. And, and [S1 affirmative] home tests were available at that time, I imagine they're very different now, but they were available. And, um, so it was positive right away. And, um, you know, although I didn't, although the dream felt unreal in those first seconds after I had it, like, this can't be, because of these intellectual reasons.

00:20:01 S1:

[S1 affirmative]

00:20:02 Tammy:

I also knew how I felt the night of the conception. I knew how strong the dream felt, and I began to believe I was pregnant before I ever tested, you know? And, and I come to that understanding, um, even though my husband, who I may have mentioned was seven years younger, and we weren't planning to get pregnant for a couple of years, um, [laughter] so it took longer. And of course, it wasn't his body's experience, so

00:20:40 S1:

[S1 affirmative]

00:20:41 Tammy:

So, that's different.

00:20:43 S1:

Yeah, it is. That's so interesting. So you were actually told in the dream. I was curious after you mentioned it, whether you just, like you were pregnant in the dream, you know, like you were a pregnant person yourself, or whether someone actually told you. So that's even more interesting, I think.

00:21:02 Tammy:

Right. But I can't remember, like, because I don't remember seeing myself as largely pregnant in the dream, but just [S1 affirmative], kind of like being told you're pregnant, and like, who told me? Why did they tell me, you know, [laughter] [right] Was it the baby told, I, I don't feel like, I don't know who, who or how the message was given to me, you know?

00:21:29 S1:

[S1 affirmative]

00:21:30 Tammy:

But, um, yeah. So,

00:21:35 S1:

Yeah. Well, thank you. [Tammy affirmative]. I appreciate that. [yeah] So you also shared that your, your mom didn't have a real understanding of how babies were made and delivered [Tammy affirmative]. And so I'm curious, but you, but you also mentioned that she had told you that often labor in your family begins with water rupturing [yes] with your waters rupture, [Tammy affirmative] rupturing. So clearly she, she learned at some point, obviously [laughter], and she, you know, she passed some pieces of information onto you. And I, I'm curious how much you knew going into this, how much you had, had learned from, you know, conversations with family members or how much you learned about it yourself, you know, how did you have your, where did your ideas of pregnancy and delivery come from primarily, before you had given birth yourself?

00:22:28 Tammy:

Well, may I share a little bit more about what she told me when I was young and, and then go from there?

00:22:33 S1:

Yes, please, of course.

00:22:34 Tammy:

Um, so my, my first awareness was that she didn't know and she thought babies came from catalogs, but we had seen somebody who was pregnant and she had told me the baby was growing inside the mother. And, you know, that was like the beginning of the stories. But every once in a while I would hear her talking to somebody or to me and say, you know, when you were born, you were so hairy when you were born, I thought you looked more like an animal than a human. And I'm like, really? [laughter], why would you, even if you thought that, why would you, you know, as an adult, I'm like, why would you tell your child this? But this is just

00:23:18 S1:

I have to admit, I wonder,

00:23:20 Tammy:

[laughter], this is just how unaware she was. Ok. And what I've learned since then, from having two children of my own and just coming back from Sicil-, Sicily, we have the Sicilian, her-heritage, and although my husband didn't, both families have, um, good hair coverage on the body [laughter]. And so I, you know, I mean, I, I wasn't literally covered with hair like a puppy, but [laughter], I [laughter], I, I had more hair than any baby she had ever seen at that time, [S1 affirmative] and it was dark. [S1 affirmative] Okay. And my first daughter also, I mean, she came with a full head of hair. I, I actually have a photo of her and I'm, I'm trying to figure out how I can share those and hold her anonymity, but she had a full hair, head of several inches of hair when she was born.

00:24:18 Tammy:

[wow] You know, some people said, [wow] oh, she looks like a, a native, or, you know, a very special type of, and I guess maybe that's a Sicilian thing, because you looked at my husband's baby picture and, you know, blondish red, you'd hardly seen, saw the hair at all. But, um, for me [S1 affirmative], so, so there was this awareness that babies are ugly when they're born. Um, it hurt so bad my mother was given a saddle block, that was the thing to do in the 1960s, so she was really drugged out. [S1 affirmative] I don't know what that means as far as consciousness. Um, I've never read about that. [S1 affirmative] um, [laughter]. So she had this very negative medical aspect of pregnancy. And, um, I mentioned that, you know, breastfeeding was just so out of style and not healthy. And why would you ever wanna do that um, kind of thought.

00:25:19 Tammy:

So when we had these cousins who lived in Vermont and they were hippies and they were breastfeeding their babies and not putting shoes on them, and were using cloth diapers and all these things, well, I guess cloth diapers a lot of people were using, but they were starting to move into Pampers and things at that time [S1 affirmative]. Um, they really questioned my aunt and aunt and I kind of went, well, this is interesting [laughter], here's somebody doing things completely different than what I was told. So that was my first introduction to, there are other ways [S1 affirmative], um, so fast forward, um, time of my pub pubescence my mother gives me a box that she'd ordered through the sanitary napkin company, and it comes with little storybooks and supplies for your first week and, and things like that. And then she eventually bought a whole set of books and there were four of them, and each one was at a higher level of

understanding of, um [oh wow] of the body and sexuality. And although she couldn't talk about it, she knew it was important because [S1 affirmative], of her shock factor [S1 affirmative]. And so she provided the information, even though she couldn't talk about it a lot, um [S1 affirmative]. And the only other thing she really said a lot was, don't come home pregnant. If you want to be sexually active, you use birth control.

00:26:55 Tammy:

And she was very, very clear about that [laughter] and [S1 affirmative], I guess she'd seen, um, family friends whose children were older, have teenage pregnancies, and she felt very clear about that [S1 affirmative]. Now, she never took us to Planned Parenthood, that wasn't as popular of a thing to do then, but [S1 affirmative], you know, talked about it [S1 affirmative], in that.

00:27:23 S1:

But it sounds like she was proactive about preparing you differently than she felt she was prepared.

00:27:28 Tammy:

Right.

00:27:29 S1:

I mean, for the time it sounds like she was pretty, and like you say, with, with, you know, um, some limitations to involve herself in that process, it sounds like, she still wanted to be sure you, you had information and, and access to information.

00:27:44 Tammy:

Yes, yes. And, and it's true. My my mother actually became a pretty progressive person for the small farm town that we lived in, um so, so that's interesting as well.

00:28:00 S1:

Yeah. Interesting.

00:28:03 Tammy:

So [okay] so then, you know, I continued to learn on my own, becoming sexually active in college. Um, and had gone to Planned Parenthood myself and gotten contraception, which I had in a drawer one summer at my house. And for whatever reason, my mom found it, and then she was mad at me, you know, [laughter], [oh] so, so there's, there's this two-way street of [yeah] use contraceptives, but oh, actually it's really bad to be sexually active before you're married because of the stigma and [right],

00:28:45 S1:

Right. It's like that conflict of practicality and morality that so often surrounds this area for women less so, I think for men, but, but for women, it's so often, like you say, just basically a direct conflict. [Yes] Like, like, it's not like a nuanced thing. It's like a head on conflict of, of

what, uh, we should do to be safe and healthy and practical, but we still shouldn't be doing any of it actually at all.

00:29:12 Tammy:

Right. [S1 affirmative] So then I had not planned to have children, as I mentioned. [right, right] So I didn't educate myself in my twenties at all. [S1 affirmative] Then I was working at a Steiner school, and I heard lots of stories, I saw the mothering magazines, I read them for teacher education purposes. And then it, as I mentioned, after meeting my future husband, I started to want to have children, which I really felt like [S1 affirmative] that was a destiny thing, you know? [S1 affirmative], that, I, that they called us together so that they could be, and, um [S1 affirmative], so then I did my education and our midwives were really, really good educators. And one of the things that they taught us was, um, having a baby wasn't like what we usually see in movies. [S1 affirmative] Which I was really grateful for, because that was my only visual.

00:30:11 Tammy:

Right. I didn't grow up on a farm, even though my dad did, and there were farms all around me. I didn't see animals being sexually active, and I did not see, um, animals being born, so [S1 affirmative]. Um, so they showed us lots of home birth movies, and they talked to us a lot about vocalization during birth [S1 affirmative] and being a singer, that appealed to me, but it also felt like, oh, well, I don't know that I could do that. Right? [laughter] When the time came, I was able to give myself permission to vocalize during the birth, which I felt really grateful because I know a lot of women, you know, hold back the sound, and I think it makes birthing a lot harder and more painful and scary.

00:31:07 S1:

Okay. So my last kind of question about pregnancy and labor has to do with that story your mom shared with you about your conception. [Tammy affirmative]. I'm curious if you're comfortable sharing sort of how you, and it's sort of similar to this story you had about how you looked when you were born mm-hmm. [Tammy affirmative], I'm curious how you carried that story, story forward into your own experience of pregnancy and labor. I mean, it's, it's not the kind of thing that you, you wouldn't bring with you, right? I mean, and I'm just curious if it, how you feel it may or may not have affected your, your experience of your own pregnancy and labor.

00:31:43 Tammy:

Right. Well, that conversation with my mom about my conception happened after my first pregnancy and birth and

00:31:57 S1:

Ok, so that's a little bit of that

00:31:57 Tammy:

Either right,

00:31:59 S1:

I'm sorry go ahead

00:32:00 Tammy:

either right before or after my second birth.

00:32:01 S1:

Okay.

00:32:04 Tammy:

So [okay] I didn't have that knowledge during my pregnancies. In fact, it had [S1 affirmative], it had to have been after, had to have been after my second daughter was born just right after.

00:32:19 S1:

Interesting. So you didn't, you didn't know that going into either of your pregnancies?

00:32:23 Tammy:

No.

00:32:24 S1:

[S1 affirmative]

00:32:26 Tammy:

But, [so] I felt it

00:32:28 S1:

Yes, go ahead.

00:32:29 Tammy:

But I felt it. Yeah. [laughter]

00:32:31 S1:

[Tammy affirmative] Can you tell me more about that? How did you feel it?

00:32:35 Tammy:

Um, well, there was this fear with the first birth that I didn't have with the second birth. And that might just be the fear of never giving birth or having seen birth before. Um

00:32:53 Speaker 3:

[S1 affirmative]

00:32:54 Tammy:

And also, as I mentioned, being stuck in a really bad position with back labor [laughter] and not being able to get up [S1 affirmative], 'cause I was tethered to the machine and, um [S1 affirmative]. But the fear that came afterwards was a question of, and it, it, it feels very abstract now, right, because it's been 30 years ago, but all of a sudden I went from being very comfortable with my body to not sure I wanted to be touched. I wanted to be touched [S1 affirmative], but I wasn't sure I wanted to be touched

00:33:35 S1:

[S1 affirmative]

00:33:35 Tammy:

and because there's this advisory, you know, don't be sexually active in these ways for so long, that kind of protected me from that, um, quick experience of having to make decisions about whether I wanted to be sexually active. But I was, I was questioning, am I remembering sexual abuse? And I found the therapist, I, you know, we processed different things. I can't even remember her name because I didn't stick with her. She didn't really, she wasn't the right person for me in the long run [S1 affirmative]. But it, it just felt like a mystery. And, [S1 affirmative]

00:34:25 Tammy:

Um, I didn't know what to do with it. I certainly didn't think to tell my mom or my sister. I did talk to my husband about it a lot because we had to negotiate what I was feeling and what we were going to do about that when sexual activity was okayed medically. And, um, but then it was weird for him as well. And I think that goes back to possibly some of his own personal trauma in life. Um, so there's this, there was this big unknown that we didn't know what we were dealing with, but we were, it, it affected me, it affected him, and it probably affected our daughter. And, um, I haven't shared this story with my daughters yet, um [S1 affirmative], but because they're both in serious relationships and actually marrying this year, both of them [S1 affirmative], um, it seems appropriate to say there's some stories that have come up during this interview that I'd like to share with you

00:35:37 S1:

[S1 affirmative] So those are the, you, you mentioned in the first interview sort of memories of sexual abuse, and that's what you're referring to now,

00:35:47 Tammy:

Right. Yes. I had memories of sexual abuse, but they've never come alive for me. And I didn't know [S1 affirmative] what they were, but I felt because of them, I felt very confused about my own sexuality for a while and [S1 affirmative], um, I also felt overly protective of my children being with other people because [S1 affirmative], if I had been sexually abused, some of the people who may have wanted to be the child caregivers in my family [S1 affirmative] or friend circles from childhood, could they have been, you know, cousins [S1 affirmative]

00:36:33 S1:

Sure

00:36:334 Tammy:

And so it caused me to be pretty isolated and not get some of the help I really needed as a young mother.

00:36:44 S1:

[S1 affirmative]

00:36:45 Tammy:

um, which is unfortunate.

00:36:48 S1:

Yeah, of course, [Tammy affirmative] of course. How long would you say that persisted for you in that way, before you felt you could, or maybe you didn't, feel like you could sort of open back up to let more people kind of participate in care and support of you in more physical ways, with you?

00:37:10 Tammy:

Yeah. Um, well, there was this homeschool group that I was, had been a teacher, uh, in the homeschool community. So some of the women with time, they were new to me when my first daughter was born, and, um, so as we got to know each other more, they started to offer. I think they saw that I needed help and they would offer certain, certain things for me, um [S1 affirmative]. And then, um, when my second daughter was born three and a half years later, which I know we might talk about at another time, but my mother had just come back from a long, um, trip with my father, and, and they had come to meet the, the new baby and who was born at home, just to say, there is [laughter] happy [laughter] ending to that for those who don't get to see the other interview,

00:38:16 Tammy:

um, and I talked to my mother and she said, why, why don't you let the kids stay overnight? Why haven't you ever, it's been three and a half years and you've never allowed your daughter to [S1 affirmative] to stay overnight. And I, I opened up to her and I said, well, I don't know why, but after my first child was born, I had this memory of sexual abuse, and I don't know if it's mine or, um, someone else's, but it was very, very, um, traumatic for me, and I felt too afraid to let my children spend the night or visit other people.

00:39:01 S1:

[S1 affirmative]

00:39:02 Tammy:

And, um, that's when she shared about, um, my conception being abusive [S1 affirmative] um, what she didn't share was any other abuse that she may have experienced, which I had already suspected that she had had [S1 affirmative] physical and or sexual abuse as a child, but she had never ever talked about it per about her person. [S1 affirmative] But she was very adamant about, um, if there was something on the news about somebody being arrested for abuse, she was always really like, good, good, you know? [S1 affirmative], she was a very strong advocate, um, for other people. Um, but then she went into a coma within 10 days after telling me this. Um, and from a gut level, I knew immediately it was because she shared this information.

00:40:07 S1:

[S1 affirmative]

00:40:09 Tammy:

Now, it ended up, she, she also contracted [laughter], a virus from her travels [S1 affirmative], but the two went together in such a way that I felt like [S1 affirmative] bringing up this information, weakened her [S1 affirmative] immune system, her weakened her spirit to have to remember and talk about it with me.

00:40:32 S1:

[S1 affirmative]

00:40:34 Tammy:

[S1 affirmative] Um, um, fortunately the happy ending is she did come out of her coma and after two or three years was fairly healthy again, and my daughters did spend some nights with their grandmother. So,

00:40:53 S1:

Good.

00:40:54 Tammy:

Yeah.

00:40:55 S1:

Good. But I'm guessing you guys didn't return to that conversation.

00:41:00 Tammy:

She wasn't able to, [S1 affirmative]and she lost a lot of memories from that time in her coma

00:41:08 S1:

[S1 affirmative], [Tammy affirmative] And so you, you just had the one memory and not, they didn't continue, you didn't continue to find more memories coming up for you.

00:41:24 Tammy:

They didn't continue. Um,

00:41:27 S1:

[S1 affirmative]

00:41:30 Tammy:

I think I did share that my first marriage was physically abusive and [S1 affirmative] those memories have continue, um, in bad dreams. [S1 affirmative] I wake up screaming sometimes. Not very much anymore, [S1 affirmative] a lot though in my thirties and forties.

00:41:53 S1:

[S1 affirmative] I'm sorry to hear that, Tammy. Well, thank you for talking a little bit about that. I know it's very hard to talk about, um, but I think it's, um, really speaks to your openness, to your own experiences, to be able to see how these pieces come together in your experience of [Tammy affirmative] of yourself and, and of your, um, connection to your children and how that connects through generations. And so I appreciate you taking some time to talk about that with me.

00:42:23 Tammy:

Thank you.

00:42:24 S1:

I do have, um, a few, um, questions about the postpartum time. [ok] That just have to do with some challenges you mentioned that you guys faced as a, as a new family in terms of colic and things like that [Tammy affirmative]. So I'm wondering if you can speak to a little bit, um, from your first interview, I remember, and I have in my notes here, that there was a time in the immediate postpartum that was peaceful and smoother.

00:42:51 Tammy:

Right. There were about six weeks of bliss [Tammy affirmative].

00:42:55 S1:

[S1 affirmative] bliss, that's the word you used. [laughter] Which is a beautiful way to describe immediate postpartum. And I have to say not how everyone would describe that time.

00:43:03 Tammy:

Well, and it wasn't completely, because there was this, was I sexually abused and remembering all of that [S1 affirmative], but the bliss of this very happy newborn who cooed and sang and was very content and, um, seemed to be a good breast feeder at, you know, there weren't any issues [S1 affirmative] there and [S1 affirmative]. Yeah.

00:43:33 S1:

That's so interesting, Tammy because just in that, that little couple sentences, I feel like you exemplified what happens for so many of us that what we're talking about sometimes when we say like bliss in this example, is that our child was experiencing bliss. And we take, that becomes part of our story too, when we, when we become parents, like we, that is our experience is if our child is happier, we are happier [laughter] even if other things are happening for us.

00:43:59 Tammy:

Exactly. At the same time, because there's a lack, lack of sleep, there's the adjustments to just having given birth and how that feels physically. And there's the, um, getting used to nursing all the time and the, all the diapering and just on repeat [laughter], that's all you do

00:44:21 S1:

[laughter]. Yes.

00:44:23 Tammy:

And somehow you have [yes] have laundry and food. [laughter] Well, probably the wisest thing my midwives said was sleep when your baby sleeps. Whenever your baby sleeps, [yeah] sleep, because [yes] you need the sleep more than anything.

00:44:40 S1:

Um, so after that though, you did have a bout, and it sounds like a relatively, perhaps a little bit long bout of some colic [yeah] in the family, right? So can you speak to what the challenges for you personally? I mean, obviously there are straightforward challenges of colic, but for you personally as a new parent, colic is very, very hard, uh, especially on new parents who don't have sort of the footing of a certain set of skills that they're confident are good parenting. Like you're being a good parent and it may not be reflected, you know, in the moment in a way that feels like you're doing the right thing, but, you know, second time, subsequent time parents, they, they sort of have that sense, but new parents really don't. And so, um, colic is really, really challenging.

00:45:27 Tammy:

It is really, really challenging and you can hear the word and it doesn't sound very pleasant, even to say colic, [laughter], you know

00:45:36 S1:

So true,

00:45:39 Tammy:

To go from this very peaceful infant to one that's unhappy from the time the sun goes down till the middle of the night was really, really hard. And that kind of seemed like, you know, just as soon as the sun was going down, here we go and [S1 affirmative] you know, we were told it wouldn't last that long. But that was also a myth and it did for our daughter last a long time. And as I mentioned, there's still digestive issues that she's dealing with. And, um, she and I are, are in early conversation about maybe this is something else that was under-diagnosed at that time in her life, and what, what could those things be? So it was really hard, um, because we were so exhausted and we were being so, so intentional with our parenting. Um, yeah, we just couldn't get a respite, you know, there would be [S1 affirmative] four to six hours every night of almost nonstop crying. And we tried all the different teas and, um, homeopathic colic tablets and all the special carries and just nurse until they fall asleep. [S1 affirmative] And, you know, as soon as she would stop nursing, she'd start crying again, and then the diaper would need changed, and then there would be more crying, you know, and it, [yeah, yeah] it just seemed like nothing helped until morning time and then things were okay. [S1 affirmative] And then it would start again and, [S1 affirmative]

00:47:27 S1:

So I, I imagine that cycle is very, can wear you down, right? Because it's hard to not sort of, I imagine, start to brace for those evening hours and so almost like tighten up before they're even there. Do you know what I mean? And like, so I feel like that time could easily encroach on the time when she was happy because you're either like, just re- oh my god, trying to recover from it, or you're like, kind of revving up for it and then that time that she's actually okay gets narrower and narrower for you [right] not for her,

00:48:00 Tammy:

And it was also in August birth, so we were moving into autumn and winter. So sunset was coming earlier and earlier every night [laughter]. And it was a long winter.

00:48:13 S1:

I'm sorry to laugh. I'm sorry to laugh, it's not funny.

00:48:15 Tammy:

Well I hadn't thought of it that way before, but as you were talking about the encroaching, I'm like, and, and the sun was sunny

00:48:24 S1:

And it literally was [laughter]. Oh my goodness. By mid-afternoon you guys are headed on the downhill side of that.

00:48:32 Tammy:

Right.

00:48:33 S1:

So did it just, um, did it pass on its own? You know, did it transition out its own? Did you guys find things that helped her to feel better? Did you find things that helped you guys stay calmer during, you know, the time she was struggling? Or did you just wait it out?

00:48:53 Tammy:

Um,

00:48:54 S1:

I don't want to say just, I mean, that's a, a feat, [right] of it's own, but sometimes that's all you can do.

00:48:58 Tammy:

Um, so the things that we did is, um, I, I talked with everybody I knew. They told us to do all the things we were already doing and none of them were working, right? I went to a doctor, all he did was comment on my chubby, happy fat baby that I was a heifer, you know, and it was like [laughter], that wasn't helpful. I finally, oh, be-, I finally met, uh, a La Leche League specialist doctor. I went to a conference, um, for La Leche league moms and babies and families. The three of us went together and the colic was still happening at that time. That must have been in the spring, 'cause I'm thinking about the weather and us sitting outside for a break during that day. But I had given up dairy, um, gluten and, uh, multiple other things. I also mentioned to you that I had also had health issues.

00:50:04 Tammy:

And it's hard to know, you know, if these medications were contributing to the colic and the digestive issues because they were going through my milk and everybody said it wouldn't matter, but I think it did matter. [S1 affirmative] Um, so I was eating fewer and fewer foods. Plus I mentioned I'd also gone vegetarian, which probably also wasn't helpful. And so I was losing a lot of weight and getting weaker and more anemic. And because I needed that animal protein and I wasn't getting it, and I didn't understand that because all the books I read said, if you just eat beans and rice together, you'll be fine. But I wasn't fine and [S1 affirmative] um, you know, they said "take the iron pills, you'll be fine," and I wasn't fine. And so that was, my health was compromised significantly at the same time, which was like a double, double thing. And I had this young husband who was beside himself and didn't know how to help. I mean, he was sweet and kind and helpful, and he worked at home a lot. He's a computer person. And even then we were like the start of the work at home dad kind of thing of, you know, so if I needed a break, he could pop up, um [S1 affirmative] and help.

00:51:31 Tammy:

So we did all these elimination things, it was still happening. Um, I decided to do a private session with this doctor the week after the conference. I called him and he started asking different questions, suggesting different things. And I wish I had the notes to tell you more of the things he suggested, but the only one that I remember that worked was he suggested that we get a reverse osmosis water filter [S1 affirmative] and stop drinking the city water, stop giving it to

our child, stop cooking with it, me, stop drinking it and see if the chemicals in the water made a difference. And the colic stopped. You know, it wasn't just a [wow] one day stop, it was like a [S1 affirmative] less and less and less [sure]. And, you know, her digestive system became happier and we probably did too. We were probably all feeling better. Um, and it's just a reminder that so much is put in the water, um [S1 affirmative] that it can affect some people's health. For other people, it doesn't affect them or, you know, it's not obvious. So,

00:52:51 S1:

How lucky that you were able to, um, you know, hook up with that guy, connect with him [right] and go through that list.

00:52:57 Tammy:

Yes, yes.

00:53:00 S1:

Yeah. So then you guys, so this is, this is sort of the, the chronology I'm trying to wrap my head around. You also mentioned, um, you know, a complication for you in this arthritis that came up for you. [right] So did that overlap? Can you help me kind of understand the timing here of your [laughter], your postpartum time? or did it?

00:53:22 Tammy:

It was all happening at the same time, and I,

00:53:25 S1:

all at the same time

00:53:26 Tammy:

I wish, I wish I had a, like a video cam I could go back and say, oh, that actually happened first in, and in this order. [oh] But I had the arthritis thing and I, I had the root canal thing kind of happen right around the same time. And I can't in the moment, remember which was which, but the arthritis was significant and I could not pick my baby up. And I was

00:53:53 S1:

So that overlapped with the colic, the arthritis.

00:53:57 Tammy:

Yes.

00:54:00 S1:

Yes. So that's an, I mean, that's a significant challenge for you then to have a baby who is colic, um, you know, struggling with colic and you can't pick her up. [right] And, and interact with her in the way that you had been.

00:54:15 Tammy:

Which is one of the reasons I slept more [laughter] than maybe some of those new moms do because I was sick, [laughter] and [S1 affirmative], I could just stay in bed with her and we had purchased [S1 affirmative] purposely bought a larger bed to do a family bed [S1 affirmative] and I could lay near her and nurse and, um, as long as, as I stayed next to her, she wouldn't wake up. But if I got up [S1 affirmative], even during the day, she would wake up immediately and start crying. [S1 affirmative]

00:54:50 S1:

So you were able to, to provide a lot of intimate comfort without having to hold her or use your [right] your hands, I assume is where you were having.

00:54:58 Tammy:

And then her father did most of the carrying at night and he ended up [S1 affirmative] you know, doing holds with like, the pressure of the arm on the baby's belly, and that helped. And then he would sometimes switch to a pillow, have a pillow in his arms and the baby on top. And I don't know how he did it without dropping her, but he did [laughter],

00:55:15 S1:

[laughter]

00:55:18 Tammy:

Um, so he did a lot of that carrying at nighttime because I couldn't [S1 affirmative] I literally could not.

00:55:29 S1:

And I mean, you know, so that helps me think about that. I was wondering how you maintained, I mean, obviously you're committed to an intimacy. You mentioned how you were carrying baby around all the time [right] you know, she was on you or with you all the time. So obviously that was a commitment you had made in those early days. And so then to not be able to do that, I, I was curious how you adjusted to that, but, but spending time in bed together, you know, still maintains a lot of that intimacy there [Tammy affirmative] and so that, that kept some of that going through. Did you feel a change in your ability, uh, or not your ability, but your sort of, um, the nature of the bonding you two were doing, you and baby, because you couldn't pick her up and carry her around and take her outside in the same ways, you know, connected to your body. I imagine you could stroll her and things, but

00:56:19 Tammy:

Right,

00:56:19 S1:

Did you feel any

00:56:19 Tammy:

so it was a, it was another huge grief. So we had all these different layers [S1 affirmative] you know the, the abuse memories, but not knowing where they were. And then, um, my health issues and then this where I couldn't even pick her up or, you know, if I'd go to pick something up in my hand, I'd like that, I'd drop it. [laughter]. I was thinking about how I was gonna demonstrate that, but it just happened [laughter]

00:56:45 S1:

[laughter]

00:56:46 Tammy:

I would drop it. So, so once again, her father worked at home for a while and would put baby in the carriage and I would push her around and I could sit in a chair and touch her, um [S1 affirmative] but then I would need him to pick her up so that I could hold her to nurse or lay down [S1 affirmative] to nurse. And somehow I can do this, I guess with arm, with, you know, arms on the chairs [S1 affirmative] or pillows propped up [S1 affirmative], I was able to nurse her sitting up as well. But, um, yeah, so that went on for at least a couple of months. Fortunately, as I mentioned, I had an elderly friend who suggested I stop eating, eating nightshades, so that did [S1 affirmative] eventually help the inflammation reduced to the point where I could start carrying her and picking her up, but it did not change the colic for her, but it, I felt better. [S1 affirmative] I still don't eat,

00:57:52 S1:

[S1 affirmative] And that sort of [S1 affirmative] and that eventually alleviated the arthritic, um, sort of complication for you?

00:58:04 Tammy:

It did.

00:58:06 S1:

Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

00:58:07 Tammy:

Yeah. Um, and interestingly enough, my second daughter, um, has the same inflammation issues with nightshades. So [interesting] because they developed during this first pregnancy or, and or right after,

00:58:27 S1:

[S1 affirmative]

00:58:29 Tammy:

it seemed to go too her body. Well, I feel very honored to share. And, um, it was extra special when I interviewed the first time about my eldest daughter that I was visiting her and, um, was

feeling very close to her at that time. I, I'm now many miles away, so that, that was extra special as well. Um, one of the things that I feel like I left out is that, um, I, I talked a lot about my own intentionality and that my husband and I had had this couple friend that we learned a lot about parenting, and I really felt like, um, he was really there with me as partners and as a team. And, um, I've become aware only with time, um, some of the difficulties and things that were hard for him, um, and hi-, him being younger and, um, some of his own life memories, how, how it affected him at the time and how it was hard for him to share baby, share me with baby, share, you know, all of a sudden the mother is more attentive to a another person.

01:00:01 Tammy:

You know, it's like, I still love you, but this person's more important now [laughter], you know, and, and I had no idea that he was experiencing that at the time. And I think it probably really affected our relationship. And I think that's something we need to talk about more in our society, um, as well, is how to, because I didn't even know it was happening because I was just in my own little bubble of bliss and then in my own little bubble of physical emergencies with baby and I, and, and so, um, it was really hard on our marriage and we also didn't get enough other human support. And we really, with all that was going on, we really needed more help. And if there's a moral to my story, [laughter], it is to have people lined up to help you daily, weekly, for as long as possible, and to do dates, even if it's a 10-minute walk up and down the street, because, you know, baby will start crying when you're not there or, or whatever.

01:01:11 Tammy:

And then make those walks longer and longer and longer. Um, and as I mentioned, because of my health and because of, um, the violent memories that were, um, from my family of origin, I, I didn't get that help. I didn't know how to ask for it. Um [S1 affirmative], and I think it really affected my mental health, affected his mental health. It may be affecting my daughter's mental health, and it certainly affected our marriage. [S1 affirmative] Short-term and long term. [S1 affirmative] We are no longer together, which, you know, but I will say that for other people. But we did stay together for 30 years. We worked really hard to be a couple [S1 affirmative] even when it wasn't easy. And in case, um, people wonder, I loved being a mom and though it was really hard, um, it's [S1 affirmative] definitely the most honored, loving thing I've gotten to do. And as my daughters are approaching their thirties now, um, well, my oldest daughter is 30 now, and my other one a little younger. I, I am loving parenting all over in new ways as we're getting to know each other, as adult to adult. And [yeah, wonder-] that's really special as well.