

00:00:00 Speaker 1:

So just a couple things in the birth itself. So you noted at one point that, let me think. You had had the Benadryl, you had a nap, and you woke up from that and you mentioned, um, a sense of just not feeling right.

00:00:13 Claire O:

Yeah.

00:00:14 S1:

Can you tell me a little bit about that not right feeling? Was it, um, not right physically, like nauseous and dizzy? Was it not right like an instinctual sense that something wasn't right?

00:00:24 Claire O:

Um, I think it was mostly just really much more painful than I anticipated it being, considering that I had an epidural. And really before I napped with the be after I got the Benadryl before I napped was when I was feeling like incredibly, I guess, out of it, so to speak, and kind of almost outside myself. And then when I woke up, it was like, I felt this sense of sort of urgency, like it was time to have the baby, even though it was not yet actually quite time [laughter]. Um, and it was kind of the first point in the long induction process where I felt any sort of urgency or just anything other than feeling like, oh, it's just kind of meandering along and I'm along for the ride.

00:01:20 S1:

You also talked a little bit about at one point feeling convinced that you were having a placental abruption.

00:01:25 Claire O:

Yes. Um.

00:01:27 S1:

Yeah. So I'm curious about that. Like, um, if you can just talk a little about what that felt like or where you think it came from or

00:01:34 Claire O:

I think,

00:01:35 S1:

how you addressed it.

00:01:36 Claire O:

I've always been an anxious person and I think being a nurse and being a labor and delivery nurse in particular, I was highly aware of various complications that could occur. And it's almost like before I even was in labor or induced, I had some sense, like a very low lying sense that I would become worried about something in the labor, like knowing myself [S1 affirmative], that

there would be something that felt not right to me and I would get concerned that I was having some sort of medical emergency. Um, I didn't know like what it would be. And I think [laughter], um, when I was in that transitional time of labor, like getting close to being ready to push, I just was feeling everything so strongly and I think [S1 affirmative] something they kind of will tell us when we're being trained as labor delivery nurses is like, if people have really severe pain with an epidural, you know, you should, you should look out for these certain complications,

00:02:45 Claire O:

so I was like, here I am having really severe pain with an epidural, [S1 affirmative], I must be having some sort of complication. I remember looking at my nurse and saying like, I think I'm abrutting, turn the Pit off, like, turn the Pitocin off. And she just like, immediately didn't question me, just like hit the, um, IV button and turned it off and was like, okay. Um, and I know that she did not clinically share that viewpoint that I was having a placental abruption [S1 affirmative], which is good, and I was not thankfully, um, but that she, it really remains actually even now, almost three years later, like a, something that I feel like I felt like so powerfully listened to in that moment because I was acting [S1 affirmative] kind of insane. And she was just like, okay, all right. Like, if you want me to turn it off, that's fine.

00:03:40:

And she did, um, call my doctor who came in and did a cervical exam and I think told me I was, I forget if at that moment I was 10-centimeters or if I was nine at that point, but I was very, very close. And I think hearing that I had made this progress and it was like almost time that gave me, um, kind of renewed confidence that everything was fine and it was just really like, oh, it's actually happening. And you know, these sensations are just like labor being intense and the epidural not being the most amazing epidural that had ever occurred. [laughter] Because I've seen a lot of different epidurals and some people like have great pain relief and it works really well, and other people, it's not amazing. And mine was never like, nobody was ever like, oh my gosh, what a great epidural on this girl.

00:04:29 Claire O:

But it was [laughter], it had been working a little bit better up until that point when things got really intense. But once, once I was told that I was like really close to delivering, I think that helped me be less worried. And I know that they did turn the Pitocin back on at some point, and I don't even think we really discussed it, they were just like, okay. And I was fine. I was fine with it. And then once I was pushing, I felt way more like in control and less painful than I had been.

00:05:01 S1:

[S1 affirmative]. [S1 affirmative]. So did you know they had turned the Pitocin back on at the time or you mean you've learned it subsequently?

00:05:07 Claire O:

No, I knew it, I was aware of it, but we didn't really talk about it. [S1 affirmative]. Um, I think once the doctor had come in and been like, everything's fine, they were like, all right, let's, you know, keep, keep this show on the road. And I was just like, okay, um, [laughter], but it wasn't this whole big thing, which actually I preferred because I feel like it just, you know, it was

addressed. My, my concern was addressed and then we just could kind of carry on and I feel like everybody kind of knew like, okay, it's actually gonna happen. We're like, we're getting close, it's fine. Um [yeah] yeah. My husband was pretty like, not super aware of the various things I was concerned-, like he knew I was concerned and he was so sweet, he was like, Claire feels like she wants to stand up. And my nurse was like, no, [laughter], she's not gonna stand up and like, walk around with this epidural.

00:06:03:

And then I know I was like in hands and knees at some point and one of my other friends slash coworkers was in the room and like, she's kind of, uh, you know, trying to do these pain relief techniques like hip squeezes and counter pressure and stuff [S1 affirmative]. And it was like, not really working, but I still really appreciated the effort and was like, they're all, they're all in with me. Like, they're here for me. It's all good. In some ways I felt like I was being really needy, um, [laughter], but I also had the sense of the people who were there and were involved, like really wanted to be there and they were into it. So that was really nice as well. And then I remember, I don't know if it was the next day or it was shortly after, but somebody showed me a picture that they had taken of everybody, like all my coworkers in our, what we call like report room where everybody watches the monitors together and charts and stuff.

00:06:55:

And everyone like took a picture of them like watching my tracing and being like, go Claire, you, you got it. And my mom, [that's so sweet] they had showed that to my mom who was in the waiting room and they were like, look, don't worry, like we're all, we're all here. And she was like, okay, because my mom is somebody who is very anxious about birth and she and I are very, very close and she didn't really understand my strong desire to have a vaginal delivery. She was sort of like, but why? Like, is there not another way? And I was like, no, there is, but I just really want this experience. And she was very anxious about it. One of the first things she said to me when she came in after I delivered was like, oh, I thought, I, I when you called me and said like, it was time to push, I, I assumed that you were gonna tell me that you had had to have a C-section.

00:07:45:

And I'm like, well, I'm glad you didn't say that on the phone. 'Cause [yeah] that would've stressed me out. But I think, you know, she, my mom had a C-section with my sister and I because of, um, I'm a twin and I think she just sort of always was a little bit like, you know, it went so well for me. Like why, why put yourself through this grueling, um, induction? And I don't, I mean, having seen so many people give birth and now with my second son having to have had a C-section with him, I definitely think, you know, there really is no easy way out and each way is hard in it's own [yeah] in its own way. But it was so funny because my mom just like loved her C-section, which I love that for her, um, because not everybody does. And she was just like, why, why, like, work yourself to death in this 40-hour induction? And I was like, I, me too [laughter].

00:08:39 S1:

But it sounds like she did her best to respect that.

00:08:42 Claire O:

She did. She did. For sure. My mom and I are like so deeply connected, um, almost to the point where I knew like I couldn't have her be there with me because I would feel this sense of like needing to like make sure she was doing okay with watching it [S1 affirmative], because I know birth makes her anxious. Um, so we had had this whole talk and plan about like how we were gonna do things and that she was gonna like stay at home and I would call her when it was time and then she would be in the waiting room and she would come in like immediately after the baby was born. So we had a whole, you know, plan about it. And she came like literally, I feel like within seconds I'm like, how did you get here so fast? And they kept calling my nurse and being like, does Claire want her mom to come back? And I was like, no, I want her to come after I've had the baby. And she literally, one of the nurses who was involved, like went and got her like, within a minute, I feel like, of me having the baby. Like my placenta was still in and my mom comes running in and was like, Claire. And I was like, mom.

00:09:45 S1:

And did any other family come up then?

00:09:46 Claire O:

So it was still, um, early Covid, so you were [S1 affirmative] only allowed to have two visitors. So I, Kerry, my husband was with me for the whole [S1 affirmative], labor and delivery and then my mom, um, had come in, so I've, um, I have two moms and so it was my, one of my moms who is the more like medical person, um, 'cause she's a nurse as well. So she was the one who I said like, okay, you can come, um, like right after the baby's born. Um, and then my, they were letting people switch out at the time, so she came with us and like, we moved over to the mother baby room and she helped us get all like resettled and stuff. And then I think it was later that day that my other mom came and visited, um, once things were like a little bit more settled [S1 affirmative]. Um, and then that was it. I believe in terms of like, I saw so many of my coworkers, but none of my other family came. [S1 affirmative]. Um, my twin sister was waiting for me at our house when we came home with him, um, which was really nice. And she had like decorated and had balloons and stuff and I saw her like right away. But yeah, it was just my moms who visited while I was actually in the hospital.

00:11:06 S1:

[S1 affirmative]. I think that you were so, in some ways so lucky that you had such a close knit group of people at the hospital [Claire affirmative] because it's so, such a different experience to have to like trade one person in and one person out because [yeah] then it's really just you and that person having this experience, but it's not like multiplied amongst the people [Claire affirmative]. Right? Like, usually, you know, often like family members will come up in a group and then they're all happy together and you're happy and they're looking at the baby and it's like a, it's sort of like self-perpetuating joy. [yeah] [laughter] because everyone's sharing it.

00:11:38 Claire O:

Yeah. It was really, I feel like it, it was, it was great. It was, it was just kind of meant to be the way it worked out that, you know, I had Kerry with me the whole time, but then my moms were

able to come up. But also that I kind of was just surrounded by this general group of my coworkers and I was very much like accepting visitors [laughter]. I was like, shortly after I delivered I was like, where's Rachel? Where's Sarah? Where's this first person, this person? And like, so many people were like, oh my gosh, Claire, like, I, I didn't know if you wanted me to come in. I wanted to give you your space, I didn't wanna intrude. I'm like, no girl. Like, [laughter], come on in. And then like, once the kind of initial excitement and everything died down and we were over on mother baby, then we had a couple hours where it was just me, Kerry, and our baby then. Um, and that was really nice too, just to kind of like settle in and it was like, you know, get a little rest and process the whole experience.

00:12:44 S1:

[S1 affirmative] It's so, um, interesting when I listened to, to the, your initial interview, like just straight through [Claire affirmative], I really, it wa- I did really feel a lot of this like work family [Claire affirmative], personal family, like balance. And it was so interesting because there's times when like, you know, all these people from work are in the room with you in a place that typically family members might be [yeah]. And your mom's like out where they would typically be. Right? Like at the nurse's station [yeah] out in the hall [laughter]. So it was like a flip flop [yeah] In some ways. Um, and I, I mean, I guess I just said this, like, I just, I felt like you were so lucky to feel so connected to the people that could be there [yeah]. Considering it was Covid and you had limitations and who know, you know, everybody doesn't have their whole family in the room when they're delivering. Of course [right]. But, but there are limitations that some people would've felt very limited by. And I feel like you really just like leaned into them and like

00:13:42 Claire O:

Yeah. You know, I feel like I just, like, it was such a wild ride with early Covid and having my first baby during early Covid where nobody kind of knew what was going on and it felt like recommendations were changing day to day and no one really, you know, knew exactly where we were headed. But I feel like I initially we were only having one visitor, so I had prepared myself mentally, like, it's just going to be me and Kerry and all my work friends. And then when it was like, okay, we can have vi- a second visitor and that second visitor could swap out with other people, that's when I was like, okay, my moms will be able to swap out and come and see me as well. But I was really like prepared to be in it with the work crew, um [S1 affirmative] and it was, it was lovely.

00:14:30:

I, I know it's not for everyone. Like I know that there are many people who would be like, this is really a lot and I don't want all of my coworkers so deeply, you know, involved in this situation. But I really loved it. And you know, I've joked like I can never move away from Ann Arbor because like, I love my hospital so much, like [laughter], I will never find that anywhere else. And, you know, I've worked there since I was a new grad nurse, like first in the ER and then moved to labor and delivery. So, it's really been my only job, like professional job has been working at St. Joe's, um, as a nurse and it's like such a special place to be. So it was, I really loved having my work people there and I felt, you know, [yeah] I was like, how do people do this without knowing every everybody who's, who's involved.

00:15:25 S1:

Yeah, right? It's, well, yeah, I think it is really different to have, you know, you don't have that built in trust when people are recommending what to do next or what, you know, they think is happening. And, um, I think it is really different [yeah]. I wonder how, how did Kerry feel about it?

00:15:42 Claire O:

Kerry is a very relaxed individual. He is really, really the calm to my crazy. And he, he was like, Claire's gonna have all her, her work friends there, and it's gonna be great. Like, she's gonna love it. Um, and he was very happy to be like, this is not my expertise. Like, I'm along for the ride. Whatever Claire and her work people think is best, we'll do that. Um, you know, he's just a very go with the flow person and I felt that he was simultaneously very present for me and also like not taking like center stage in any way, like especially [S1 affirmative] throughout the long induction and stuff. He was kind of like, when we were at home, I almost, and I was uncomfortable and having contractions and having concerns about if the baby was moving enough before we went to the hospital. I feel like he had a lot of anxious energy then.

00:16:50:

Like, he was kind of like, should we be doing something like what should we be? [S1 affirmative]. And when we got to the hospital, it was sort of like, you could just feel that he was like, all right, like, we're here, these people have got you and like, let me just settle in. Um, you know, my nurse and I were joking about how he can sleep anywhere and he, you know, he was totally fine, totally at ease. And then when the baby was born and we had our son, he was so emotional and he was crying and he was so excited and, you know, so happy. And I feel like it was just, it really was the perfect balance for him because, you know, he didn't, he didn't feel like he had to, you know, like learn the language of birth and the whole thing. He would [S1 affirmative] and I, I think if I had really wanted him to, if I was like, I need you to be my advocate and like this and that, he totally would have, but I was like, this is, birth is my whole life. Like, it's fine. Like just [S1 affirmative], just be here and be yourself and it's, it's all good. So I think he would say it was a very positive experience.

00:17:56 S1:

Nice. Nice. I'm so impressed too by this, um, you can see I thought a lot about this crossover of work and home life because giving birth is a really vulnerable thing, like most people [yeah] when they give birth wouldn't invite coworkers, right? Like if they didn't work in a hospital [laughter] [right, right]. You know, they wouldn't like invite their office mate [yeah] to like come and watch them give birth. And part of that is because there's no reason they'd be there. But part of that is like lots of people keep a really clear division, sort of [Claire affirmative], you know, between work life and even if you're friends with your coworkers [yeah] you don't always like invite them out with your siblings or something [right] you know, there's often a divide. And so I was so impressed as I listened to your story about, again, like that you just seem to have no anxiety about like, um, them seeing you in, in this way and then coming back to work and feeling like you could reclaim, you know, not reclaim [yeah] but still hold your own professional space in that professional setting.

00:18:50 Claire O:

I think part of it is that it's such a well-trodden path at my job. Like Kerry calls it the most pregnant workplace in America. Um, [laughter] so I had seen, not necessarily even like personally me, but like I had been aware of other coworkers delivering and [S1 affirmative] coming back to work and like seen that no matter what happened on their labor journey, like it was always like supported and it was all good when they came back and, you know, you'd always hear even, you know, people who had rough deliveries or traumatic deliveries, it was always talked about with like so much empathy and never any judgment. And everybody always, when they came back to work, it felt like such a warm welcome. So I had seen this play out and felt tr- like, like a lot of trust that it would work out for me as well.

00:19:55:

Um [S1 affirmative]. So I think that was part of it. I did kind of ahead of time, I had a little bit of like, oh my gosh, what if I act really crazy? Like, what if I'm like screaming and like, [yeah], absolutely losing my mind. And I had sort of, oh, I'm a very like, humor as a coping mechanism person. And I, I kind of jokingly talked this through with coworkers, like, what if I'm insane? And they were like, well, you've seen, you've seen how people are in labor and like, it's fine. Like that's, that's what we're here for. [S1 affirmative]. So I think, you know, I, did I ahead of time have a little bit of worries like, oh no. Like what if it's really, you know, a lot. Um, but I also knew it almost felt like there was, even though obviously there are other hospitals and if I hadn't wanted to deliver at my work, I could have delivered somebody else. But I was like, I knew that I wanted to deliver at my work and it was so important to me. So I was just kind of like, come what may, we're gonna do it, we're gonna be in it together and we'll just kind of work our way through it.

00:21:01 S1:

[S1 affirmative]. And did you feel any different when you returned to work? Did you feel any hesitancy or

00:21:07 Claire O:

Certainly not about the delivery. Partially because it was like, at that point, three months in the past and all these people had been part of [S1 affirmative], you know, who knows how many deliveries since then. I had a lot of trepidation, [so true] about leaving my baby, um, but one of my friends like had donuts the night 'cause I was working night shift, um, like brought donuts the night I came back and it, it really was like such a warm welcome back that any anxiety I had about coming back was all about leaving my baby and like being away from him [S1 affirmative] versus coming, like, really the only thing that got me out of the house and back to work was like, oh, I get to be with these people again and I get to rejoin this social circle and community that is so meaningful to me.

00:21:56 S1:

[S1 affirmative] [good]

00:21:57 Claire O:

So yeah, it was, that was fine.

00:22:01 S1:

Nice. Um, I want to ask a little bit about, and we talked a little bit about this in the initial interview too, but I'm, I'm wondering if there's any more we want to say or you want to say about it, because I was also struck and, and like I say, we touched on this by the fact that you had a fair number of what are typically referred to as interventions [yeah] right? Like if I think about it, right, you had stripping in the membranes twice maybe [yeah] Yes? You had a Foley [Claire affirmative], you had Pitocin, you had an artificial rupture, right [Claire affirmative] of membrane [yeah], and then you had Benadryl and then Pitocin and oh, I did that one, an epidural [yeah]. So that's a, you know, it's a fair number of things and they're called interventions often because they are sort of conceptualized as things that intervene because it's needed.

00:22:52 Claire O:

Right.

00:22:53 S1:

Because something is not progressing as expected or as hoped or in a safe way, and those it require- the labor requires an intervention [yeah]. And this is how a lot of women sort of internalize then these process of interventions. But, and maybe it's the distance from the experience, but when I hear you talk about it, I was really struck by the fact that it sounded like to me, and I certainly want you to correct me if I'm wrong [Claire affirmative], but it sounded to me like you had conceptualized them as like helpful things that moved your labor along. In other words, like not the things that made your labor work, but rather things that sort of helped your labor, I don't know how to put it, like helped it move towards its inevitable. Do you know what I mean? [yeah]. It didn't sound to me like you thought there was something wrong with your labor that needed intervention.

00:23:45 Claire O:

Yeah. I think because of being induced, I had just kind of been like, I'm signing up for it all. Like whatever needs to happen is gonna happen. Um, and I had seen so many inductions that I knew like that very rarely is an induction, like low intervention, but they typically tend to have a lot of intervention. So I kind of went into the decision to be induced, like, okay, there's gonna be interventions. Um, I did kind of have a little bit of a feeling afterwards, like I had felt like my labor had sort of been like not in my own power, so to speak, like that it, it was kind of like [S1 affirmative] almost a prolonged medical procedure in which I was a very active participant. And I think [laughter] that I have a desire if I like, am to have, um, more children in the future, which I don't know if I will or not.

00:24:44:

Like I have a desire to have a different, um, experience of that. Just, just for the contrast in experience, not so much because of [S1 affirmative], it being neg-, like it wasn't negative for me in any way, but there is part of me that's like, what would it be like to like go into labor on my own and not like nobody needs to do anything and the baby just comes out like, wouldn't that be so cool? Um [S1 affirmative] but I also felt like very at peace with a, especially with the whole Covid situation going on, I was like, okay, like I'm Covid negative, I wanna just have the baby and like get out of the hospital before I like get Covid somehow. Like let's just do this induction and whatever needs to happen is gonna happen. Um, and I think like later afterwards my doctor

had said to me, you know, like there was a point where I was like, ooh, like, you know, we're really having to do like every intervention and things are moving along, but not going super fast,

00:25:41:

and she's like, I got a little nervous at some point. Like, we're like, what if, like what if it doesn't happen? But nobody breathed a word of that to me during the induction. Nobody ever made me feel anxious or said anything like, oh, like, you know, like it's not working. And I knew, like, I knew it was not going super fast, but I also felt like, you know, every time that I got checked or anything happened, somebody was like, oh, now you're, now you're one more centimeter than you were before. So I was always given like, just enough good news and positive news to like, you know, keep the faith, so to speak, that it was [S1 affirmative] working and it was fine.

00:26:25 S1:

You mentioned in your interview that your focus, you were really focused on the vaginal birth part.

00:26:31 Claire O:

Yeah.

00:26:31 S1:

So I, that also struck me because, you know, as a doula I've had many clients who, and I often encourage them like think what are your sort of like non-negotiables [Claire affirmative] and then be willing to flex on things because birth is full of surprises. Like you're gonna have to flex somewhere [yeah]. And it's good to know where you really, really don't want to. And so it sounded to me in a way that that delivering vaginally was, was a big piece for you.

00:26:55 Claire O:

Yeah.

00:26:57 S1:

And it sounds like your support team either was aware of that 'cause you told them, or that's just also, you know, their sort of default is to really hope for a vaginal delivery [Claire affirmative]. But it sounds like, you know, even though they, I feel like their choice to not tell you, you know, gosh, I'm a little bit worried we might be headed towards a C-section kind of thing, was really in line with your priorities.

00:27:19 Claire O:

Yeah. I think partially it's just the provider that I had who, you know, I feel aligned with, which is one of the reasons, you know, I had chosen to work with her and just the, you know, the hospital's MO in general is like, let's try as long as it's safe and as long as it's, you know, desirable for whatever reasons, let's try to have vaginal deliveries if possible. Um, [right] so I think that was good in terms of sharing that priority. I don't know, I don't feel like I talked about it a lot during labor. Certainly before labor I had said like that I really hoped to have a vaginal delivery. But when we were going through the induction process, I don't think I ever, it was almost like a superstitious thing. Like if I didn't say how much it mattered to me, I wasn't like, I

was just like, I'm not gonna bring any, any energy into the space about like if it's vaginal or if it's a C-section, like [S1 affirmative].

00:28:29:

I really wanted it to be vaginal, but I was just like, I'm not even gonna, um, you know, I knew it was a possibility of course that it wouldn't work out, but I was like, I'm just not even really gonna talk about it. Like as long as there's nothing going wrong in the induction. And I'm very thankful that my, like the fetal heart rate tracing was always very reassuring or category one as we like to say, um, so that was good. And I think I definitely felt like very reassured that my baby was tolerating labor well and I sort of had the mindset [S1 affirmative], like if he's tolerating it, I'm tolerating it. Like if he can hang in there with me for 40 hours, like I can hang in for 40 hours. So that was great. Especially since when I initially came in after the Foley balloon, it didn't look amazing and then perked up and was great.

00:29:26:

The whole duration [yeah] of the labor. So I think that was a big part of it. But yeah, I definitely, definitely desired a vaginal delivery and I think that was known, even if it wasn't like something we were actively talking about, I didn't have a birth plan, I never wrote anything down. I sort of semi-jokingly said like, my birth plan is come to the hospital, like, listen to you guys, have the baby. That's it. [laughter] [go home]. Yeah. Like, you guys will tell me what needs to be done. And you know, I think because I tend to be a little bit of an anxious person and as a nurse I'm very conscientious and have like a little bit of like thrum of anxiety. Like, I've gotta gotta do whatever I need to do for my patient. There was definitely a lot of people telling me like, we've got you, like, you don't have to be a nurse, you can just be a mom.

00:30:17:

Like, just put that out of your mind and like, we'll handle everything. And I, I really tried to do, so like, I was like, I'm not gonna be staring at the monitor the whole time. I'm not gonna be like, you know, there are little things that like, as a nurse you kind of can't help but do for yourself. Like, I like unhook myself to go to the bathroom or like do little things, but I was like [S1 affirmative], I'm not gonna be like acting like I'm my own patient. Like, I'm just gonna let let it happen. So

00:30:48 S1:

[S1 affirmative] Nice. Nice. So you mentioned that at some point you felt strongly that it was a boy. I'm just personally interested [yeah] in, if you can tell me a little more about that feeling. Like

00:31:00 Claire O:

I think

00:31:01 S1:

like it was a thought that just came to your head or

00:31:04 Claire O:

Yes. Because

00:31:05 S1:

Something changed in your experience or,

00:31:07 Claire O:

Well, I think there were a couple things, like throughout the pregnancy we didn't, we didn't know. I come from like an all female family. I have my two moms who are a couple, my twin sister, we had female dogs. I work in like the most female workplace you could imagine. Um, so I think there was a part of me before getting pregnant that was like, oh, of course I'll have a girl. Like I am a girl's girl. Like, that's me. Um, but as we went through the pregnancy, there was whatever people would guess what I was having people always guess boy for the most part. Like, so that, that was kind of in my ear for whatever reason, my parents especially felt very strongly that it was a boy. And I think part of it there was sort of this like, oh, like we need a, like some male energy in this family, um, [laughter].

00:32:02:

But I still, for much of the pregnancy was kind of like, we just don't know. Like, it's just gonna be a surprise. Like we just, you know, I, I agonized and agonized over the names because we went in with like a girl's name and a boy's name since we didn't know. Um, I spent a lot of time thinking about girls' names, like probably way more time than thinking about boys' names. Um, and had a ton of girls' names that I loved. Like I, I could name 50 girls, like if I had the opportunity to and really struggled with boys' names. Um, and we had chosen a different name, different boys' name, but as got closer, I started like having misgivings. I kind of was like, oh, I don't know if this is it. And then I had this moment when I was about 35 weeks pregnant where I was in the shower and Ben, his full name is Bennett.

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And it just like, it was a name that we had tossed around literally years ago before we were married or even considering like having children in the near future. And I just was like, all of a sudden it just hit me like, obviously the baby's name is Bennett. And I called Kerry into the bathroom and I was like, I think it's Bennett. And he was like, I love it, that's great. And after so much back and forth, like we had talked about names ad infinitum, like we just, it was partially me and that I love baby names and love talking about them and so I was obsessed and really enjoyed it and Kerry would be like, please, can we talk about literally anything else? And I was like, no. Um, [laughter] I

00:33:28 S1:

No,

00:33:29 Claire O:

Just had this moment where I was like, this is it. And Kerry was like, oh my gosh, of course it is. So part of it was that like I had, we suddenly had so much clarity about the boy's name that I was like, and I feel like sometimes I have like a little bit of like mystical feelings about things. Like, oh, well that's the universe telling me it's a boy. But I still wasn't a hundred percent convinced. And then when I was in labor, I wasn't even thinking about if it was a boy or girl. Like it was not on my mind at all. Um, and I knew that one of the residents who I'm friends with knew it was if

it was a boy or a girl because she had ultrasounded me once to look at something and like accidentally saw and was like, I'm not gonna tell.

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Like, she didn't tell me, she didn't tell anybody. She was like, this secret is safe. I'll not tell anybody. But I knew that she knew. Um, but I, I don't even know why I brought that up, that's kind of irrelevant. But while I was in labor, I didn't really consider it. I was not really thinking about it. And then it was almost just like in that split second, that moment between delivering and seeing, I just like had this wave of certainty. Like it's definitely a boy. Like this is Ben. Um, and I, like one of my coworkers said that one of the first things I said, like when I like lifted him up was I was like, hi Ben. Um, and I always knew that I would call him Ben versus Bennett though it's funny 'cause now he has chosen at almost three years old to just go by Benny and refers to himself as Benny, which I think is so cute. [laughter]. But

00:35:06 S1:

You never know what they'll do with the names you give.

00:35:08 Claire O:

Yeah. [laughter] and I love, I love Bennett, I love Ben, I love Benny, I love all the varieties. So I'm like, whatever you wanna be called is great. Um, but I just suddenly like, like knew it was a boy and I said a couple minutes or hours, who knows, time is such a weird thing during labor and postpartum, I was like, I just all of a sudden knew it was gonna be a boy. And we called my husband's family like from the delivery room to tell them we'd had the baby and that everything was good. And they were like, so like, what is it? And Kerry's like, you know, this is your grandson Bennett O'Connell Martin. And they were like, oh my gosh. And they were so shocked, like, 'cause they really thought it was a girl, even though my family really thought it was a boy. Um, and it was just, yeah, it was really exciting. Um, and I would've been thrilled either way. So it was nice just to have it be one of those things where either no matter what, I was gonna be really happy. So

00:36:07 S1:

Yeah, of course. Did you guys have a plan for who was gonna catch the baby?

00:36:13 Claire O:

Not really. I think I assumed that my OB would catch and she did and then handed him right to me. [S1 affirmative]. I have a picture that was a little, uh, a little too graphic for [laughter] for, for submission for this, but that I love of her, of him coming out and her like lifting him up and me reaching down for him. Um, and it was all like, that was the part I loved the most about it is like, even though it had been a long labor and there had been all these interventions, it was like the moment of delivery was so amazing and felt so instinctual, like to reach for him and like to bring him up to like, put him on my chest and everything. And it was just, that was such a great moment and I didn't, I felt like I didn't really have a plan for it or like instructions or like, I want it to be this way or that way. I was, it just, but it just worked out beautifully and like was perfect.

00:37:10 S1:

So you said this really beautiful phrase in your initial interview about when you left the hospital, literally coming out of the hospital, you said “it was like, I birthed myself into this sunny, bright world.” And I think that's such an interesting idea. I mean, on one hand I can imagine you may have just meant it like it was just really hot and bright and you'd been in a darker place [yeah]. But I'm curious if it was on a larger scale, um, or just a different, also a different kind of feeling of like sort of that transition from you went in as you [yeah]. And now you're a mom and you have a whole other human [yeah]. And like, I was just curious, that phrase was so poignant and I was curious if you had more thoughts on, on sort of what you were feeling when you described it that way.

00:37:55 Claire O:

Yeah, I mean, I remember that feeling so vividly of com-, like probably one of my most clear like visceral memories of my life is the feeling of being wheeled out in the wheelchair and waiting on the curb of the hospital for Kerry to bring the car around. And I felt like I was like blinking into this really super, it was super bright, it was super sunny, it was hot and I felt like, it felt like I'd almost been in like a cocoon or a dream or something and it was like, here it is. It almost felt like that moment was really the moment that I truly became a mom in my own like power and on my own. Because up until that point I'd been obviously in the hospital and surrounded by this work family and you know, kind of in this sort of in between zone of like, the baby is here and I have him and I love him so much, I'm getting to know him, but I'm also not like, fully totally in charge of him 'casue he's technically a patient at the hospital along with me, [laughter].

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And then coming out into the world and being like, this is like, this is life now. It's, it's the three of us and we're doing it. Um, and it was just like, not scary, but just felt very surreal and very like, like I, I, I can feel it now. Like remembering it just like, all right, like what, what do we do now? Like, what's our next, our next thing? And like, we lived probably at that point only like 10 or 15 minutes from the hospital and it was like, so I guess we're just, we're just gonna drive home and we're gonna get going [laughter] on [yeah] living life together. And I loved, I kind of joke sometimes, like, I can't imagine having a baby in a different time of year, even though I know that people do it all the time [laughter]. But it just felt so like, of course it's like high summer and 90 degrees.

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Like, it just felt very enlivening and it was something I did during those kind of like early postpartum weeks where there's not really any differentiation between times of day and like, life is weird. Sometimes when he was sleeping, I would go out and like stand in my driveway for like two or three minutes and just kind of photosynthesize in the sun and be like, brought back to life and like, okay, like I'm part of the world and not just [right] like things are existing outside of my home. Um, [laughter], but yeah, that was kind of the first moment, like just, it was also probably the first moment I was really alone with him be-, even though I was only alone with him for like five minutes while Kerry went and got the car. But, you know, Kerry and I had been in this hospital room together 24 hours a day, and then suddenly it was like he was going around to get the car and I was like watching the baby by myself. And I was like, here I am just, just momming

it up [being a mom] [yeah]. And I had seen people, you know, one of the things I always liked, even before I transferred to labor and delivery was seeing people, um, waiting at the doorway with their, with their new baby, like waiting for their partner or whoever to bring the car around. And I was like, [S1 affirmative], you know, always would see these people and be like, look at these, these moms. And now it was like I was one.

00:41:30 S1:

[S1 affirmative] When you shared your story in first interview was so, um, it was so lovely because you, you almost like bookended your story because at the beginning you mentioned showering at your moms', your parents' house, like the night before or a day before you, you went to get induced and leaving there thinking like, oh, this will be the last time. [Claire affirmative], like, you put it as, this is the last time before I have the baby, but part of me felt like it's also the last time that you're their kid and not also a mom [yeah]. Right? And then at the end, you said this, this phrase about like sort of birthing yourself out into the world and it was just this lovely little [yeah] like it really encapsulated the birth as this like in between time [yeah] as you were making this transition, you know?

00:42:14 Claire O:

Yeah. And it really, it really was like, I, it was so I remember like, it was, it was emotional, like leaving my parents' house and, but like all of us kind of feeling like a little choked up. Like, this is the last time, like that this is the way our, our family is. And like, in that moment, you know, once you have the baby, it's all about the baby. Um, but in that moment, I know part of it was like, next time we see you, we'll we'll have a grandchild and we'll have this new person in our family. But in that moment with my moms, it was like, next time we see you, you're gonna be a mom. And it was [S1 affirmative] [yeah], it was so nice. And then like, the next time I saw 'em, I was a mom and have been ever since for the hundreds of times I've seen them since [laughter].

00:43:01:

Um, and it just was this very, like, to me, the end of pregnancy and birth and the immediate postpartum is like just such a sacred and unique time. Like, you're just in this in between and it's so intense and it's so visceral and it's like just, there's, there's nothing like it. Like I, I feel like it's almost in some ways, to me it feels like the pinnacle of human experience. Like you're just feeling so much. And there are times I'm like, how, like, you know, how am I gonna, what if I don't have any more kids and I have to go the rest of my life without having that experience again and feeling like on the precipice of this huge life change in the same way. And people are like, well, you're not just gonna like, have kids and have kids like every, every two to three years for the rest of your life.

00:43:49:

I'm like, I know, but like, there's just something about it that's so amazing and like, so life-giving [S1 affirmative] that I can't, you know, I can't imagine not having that part of life, you know, on the horizon. But like, it was so meaningful to me. And I still, like, I I think about it regularly and like, remember it. I'm like, that was, that was amazing, all parts of it. Like the before when I was super pregnant, and then the induction and the immediate, the delivery and the immediate postpartum and then even the next couple weeks where you're kind of just like, it's all happening [laughter].

00:44:24 S1:

[S1 affirmative]. Yeah. I love that. That's a, that's a really, it's so true. It's so true. There's just nothing like it. And it is sometimes hard to imagine like going the rest of your life without having it again [yeah] [laughter]. It's really, I mean, you don't necessarily want to keep having more children [right]. But that feeling, it's really nice to feel that way.

00:44:43 Claire O:

[laughter]. Yeah. And you know, sometimes when you talk to people and everybody has such different experiences, but like, you know, sometimes I'll talk to my, you know, family members or whatever, and they're kind of, you can tell that they're like, oh, you know, like, don't worry like you'll get out of the trenches of parenthood one day and kind of reclaim yourself. And I'm like, no, no, no, that's not what I mean at all. Like, [laughter] like, [yeah], like, I feel like, like almost that like perfect, like beautiful time. Like I wanna just like, you wanna be able to recapture it, but that's part of what makes it so special is that it's, it's not recapturable. Like, it's just that moment in time. So [yeah] I always think it's funny when it's more like, don't worry, it gets easier. I'm like, no, that's not what I'm worried about at all. [laughter]. I'm worried that I can't ever go back. [laughter].

00:45:33 S1:

Was there any part of you leaving your, um, parents' house that night that felt sad to not be the, the baby, like their baby anymore? And of course you're still their kid, but I think for some people they feel that transition where they're not sort of the the bottom of the family [yeah] anymore there's like a generation beneath them. It's, it's a, a recalibration of sorts and some, you know, people feel it differently.

00:45:57 Claire O:

Yeah. You know, in the moment no, I, I didn't, I didn't feel sad about that at all. I think I had no idea how profound the shift would be in having a child. Like, I just didn't know what was coming. Um, [sure] but I did feel like even in the moment this wistfulness of like, you know, these are my parents who I love so much, and love me so much, and like I'm about to be on the other side of that relationship and like, feel that for someone else. Um, and just knowing like this huge thing was coming and, you know, it was like, it was such a, a beautiful night with my parents and at their house. Um, and I'm so glad we had that night and I remember it so well. And it's funny just because we all knew like, it will never be the same again, but you just don't even know [yeah] how,

00:46:59 S1:

How much

00:47:01 Claire O:

[laughter], so it wasn't, I was, and I was so ready, like, I was so excited to, to give birth and get this show on the road. So it was wistful and it was nostalgic, but I was also like, chomping at the bit like, what if my water breaks right now? They were like, it probably won't. [That's wonderful]. So I was recently at a baby shower for, um, someone who is pregnant with their first baby, and I did, I felt such like, tender, like love for them on the outset of this huge journey. And

I think I would just say to anybody anticipating becoming a mom, like it's, there's just so much that's unexpected in that you can't know until you know, and it's all so individual and just like to let yourself feel it because it's gonna be like some of the most profound memories and experiences of your life.

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And you know, unfortunately it's not always positive for everybody. And that as a, as a person who's given birth, and as a mom and as a person who just loves other people, and as a nurse and birth worker myself, it makes me very sad. But not everybody has the birth that they, they want. Um, but just I guess to be able to, in whatever way feels right, like be present for it, um, because it [S1 affirmative] it is so, you know, such a tangible and unique moment in your life where everything kind of shifts in a way that I found very moving.