

00:00:00 Andrea R:

I appreciate the space. It's been a long time. It's just been a lot, a long time coming, been a long time since I've reflected on a lot of this, and probably the first time I've reflected on some of it.

00:00:22 Speaker 2:

Well, you can have as much space as you need this morning.

00:00:29 Andrea R:

Um, so I guess for me, um, this starts with my desire to be a mom, which was back as early as I can remember in childhood [S2 affirmative]. Um, I remember playing with my babies. I remember planning to be a mom. I grew up with three siblings. Um, I was the oldest. I have three brothers. And so I was just kind of a secondary caregiver from the start. Um, and so, you know, life progressed and, um, in that my husband Greg, and we got married and had wanted to have kids. I think at that time, as with many people, you just plan as though you're the ones in control of it [S2 affirmative]. Um, and so we, he had wanted to wait a year. I wanted to start right away so we kind of compromised. Um, and six months in, we went off birth control and got pregnant within the second month. Um, and it was kind of poetic, like we, we got married in August. We had taken what we referred to as a mini moon at that time. And then we, um, we took a, like a delayed honeymoon to Hawaii in March, and it was on that trip that we got pregnant.

00:02:38 Andrea R:

Um, and so all the feelings, excitement, a little nervous. Um, and I don't even remember exactly when the spotting happened or when it started. Um, it went on for maybe a week. I went in, they found a heartbeat. Um, everything was okay with spotting tapered, and then I forget how, how many weeks that was. But then we went in for our, oh 12-week ultrasound, and the baby was measuring at eight weeks and there was no heartbeat. And, and so since a month had gone on where I didn't pass the embryo, um, then we went in and did A DNC. And it's, it's interesting the timing of this interview too, because it was, it was around this time.

00:04:06 Andrea R:

In fact, it was May 23rd and then I think it was the 25th that we had the DNC. Um, and so that, I thought that was hard, but what came after was actually the hardest. And what came after was an onslaught of trying and not getting pregnant [S2 affirmative]. And, and that happened [deep breath] for another, well, I think it was another full year before that we opted for fertility testing [S2 affirmative] and all of it, you know, didn't make sense because we got pregnant and we got pregnant right away and [right, right]. Um, and even, like, even within the medical, um, context, they didn't have answers for us. It was mystery, mystery infertility, which is just code for, we don't have the funding, nor do we care to obtain funding to have [laughter] to conduct research for this specific realm of [right] these reproductive studies [right]. Um, and so [nose blowing] I just felt like, I felt like a guinea pig. I felt like they kept throwing drugs at me [S2 affirmative] that ended up with horrific side effects.

00:06:04 S2:

Oh my goodness.

00:06:05 Andrea R:

Mi- migraines, rage, um, weight fluctuation, um, [wow] you name it [wow]. I mean, they're playing with your life force [right] and hormones, so [right]

00:06:22 Andrea R:

Um, and then we [laughter] we knew, um, we went to U of M, um, because of my insurance, we went to Briarwood Center for Reproductive Medicine [S2 affirmative], um, which candidly I would burn their clinic to the ground [wow]. It was awful. The experience we had was awful.

00:06:53 S2:

Wow, I'm so sorry to hear that.

00:06:55 Andrea R:

We were, we felt like we were a number [S2 affirmative]. Um, I remember even sitting, it took a lot, a lot for us to get to a point where we were considering IVF [S2 affirmative], and, and we, I remember sitting in that like education session that they have a nurse put on, and she said, and I asked if there was any kind of like nutrition, uh, recommendations that they could make. And she said, oh, no, there's no studies to really support that and we don't wanna stress you out. I remember being like, what the fuck?

00:07:46 S2:

Right? Right.

00:07:47 Andrea R:

Are you joking? Like there's no connection between what you put in your body, though. I'm only putting this medication into my body and we're expecting an outcome. Like, what?

00:07:56 S2:

Right. Right.

00:07:58 Andrea R:

And it just was so evident through all of these things, the disconnect between the whole person [right]. And what they're doing.

00:08:10 S2:

Right.

00:08:12 Andrea R:

Which, many of their practices are very outdated and they don't treat, I felt like they didn't treat our situation as a, a unique and individual case.

00:08:33 S2:

Right.

00:08:34 Andrea R:

But they, they really have like a handful of protocols, three to be exact, and if you don't fit within the box of that protocol, that's of, they make you feel like it's your fault [S2 affirmative], like, there's something wrong with you because these protocols, oh these are,

00:08:53 S2:

These are the things that could be happening [right] and if it's not fitting you, right

00:08:58 Andrea R:

Right. Um, so we went through, um, the egg retrieval and the, and that in and of itself, I mean, there's so many roller coasters [S2 affirmative] to get to that point. And then you have the egg retrieval and your hormones are like all jacked up. And then, um, and then you're waiting, you know, they collect a certain number of eggs, but they, and then they take those eggs and they allow them, um, they, they had like two pools for us. Like they had a pool where they let like a Petri dish where they let the sperm like inseminate the eggs on their own. And then they had, um, it's called ICSI [Intracytoplasmic Sperm Injection], but it stands for something. It's like, it's basically where they inject the sperm into the egg [ok] and then allow it to form. I think through all of that, I forget how many, we got five maybe. And then at the end of all of that, we had four [S2 affirmative], um, that matured to day seven or whatever it is. And then they take those four embryos and biopsy them, and then send them away for genetic testing, which of course is an additional cost [S2 affirmative]. Um,

00:10:42 Andrea R:

And we waited and waited and waited, and all of our embryos came back and they were, um, they were all genetically sound. Um, and at that point, you know, I'm going from acupuncturist to, I mean, I'm seeing a therapist, I'm seeing a psychiatrist. My mental health is just shot [S2 affirmative]. Um, my husband really, um, turned to drinking during that time. Um, I didn't realize exactly how bad it got [S2 affirmative], but, and you know, it was, it's hard to say what came first, the chicken or the egg, like our con- like, so with his drinking and, and my like emotional distress, like our connection was not there. And so we're just like in this awful cycle [S2 affirmative], um, of disconnection and, um, a beautiful birth that, well, actually kind of ironic in all of this, we decided that we wanted, um, to get a puppy because we just had all this love and nowhere to put it [yeah, yeah].

00:12:12 Andrea R:

And so, um, we're on a list for, um, a female golden retriever, and I got a call from the breeder the day after these puppies were supposed to be born. And she said that their, the labor was very hard and not all of the puppies made it. And so we didn't have a puppy [laughter], like there were only, there's only one or two female puppies that were born in the litter. And so, um, and because of where we were on, on the list, I think we were third, [sure] third for wanting a female, that they didn't have a puppy for us. And, and it just felt [laughter] exactly like our [of course], fertility journey. Um, [yeah], yeah, [of course]. And then in a lot of ways actually, and, and then, um, she referred us to, um, a different breeder that she worked with that said that, that she, her, you know, dog just had puppies and they, they have one female in the litter left. And so I called her right away. And, um, and that puppy was ours. And so, and so we, um, like my husband had

certain specs that he wanted for this golden retriever, like a darker golden [S2 affirmative] um, and we had talked about her name and we had talked about Zoe.

00:13:51 Andrea R:

And, um, when we went to meet her, the breeder said, uh, this is your girl. She's, without any knowledge of this, the breeder said to us, um, she's, she's actually the darkest in our litter and because of that, she reminded us of a dog from a previous litter named Zoe. And so we've been calling her Zoe [laughter]. So, um, and this breeder, um, her daughter [laughter], who was really attached to this dog, who is our Zoe, um, her name was Charlotte. And we had told the breeder that that was our, our name, if we have, um, if we have a [wow]. You know, shared that we were going through fertility [yeah] um, issues. And, um, and she, and she had given us some encouraging words. And, uh and so then yeah, we got, Zoe, around the time when we started, um, the fertility, uh, stuff, so I had like a, I had an endometriosis, um, oh, a laparoscopy [S2 affirmative]. I had, I had, um, advocated for that before any, um, before anything else. And that's another thing that they can't tell if a woman has endometriosis based on, they can't confirm it based on anything but surgery, which is [laughter], which is like, hmm, let's see, hmm, if there was a, if this was in a male body [laughter], and the only way to prove it was surgery, I'm pretty sure they would figure out a way to not have to do surgery to prove it [yeah] pretty quickly.

00:16:04 S2:

Yes.

00:16:05 Andrea R:

Um, so it just felt like all this injustice [S2 affirmative], like in the bigger picture that I was experiencing, that I was experiencing on a micro level [S2 affirmative]. And, um, and so they confirmed it was a very slight case, but they removed what they saw and said, you know, in five to six months, typically, if that's what's, um, impacting your getting pregnant, usually, yeah, within five to six months after the surgery you would get pregnant. Um, and so five to six months came and went. That did not happen. And we moved forward. That happened in January, and then in June of that year, we moved forward with our egg retrieval [S2 affirmative]. So I'm kind of going back in time, but yeah,

00:17:01 S2:

That's ok. That's ok.

00:17:03 Andrea R:

egg retrieval. We did, we got our embryos and our first, our first embryo transfer happened in August of 2019.

00:17:27 S2:

Okay.

00:17:29 Andrea R:

[inaudible] Yeah, August of 2019. And nowhere on our radar was it that it wouldn't work. Nowhere. Because we had, we had gotten pregnant [right]. That wasn't the issue [right]. We have genetically strong embryos. That's not the issue. You know, now we're basically like spoon

feeding [laughter], and they're priming it with all these hormones, you know, [right] like we're, we're doing everything and it didn't take [huh], and so we were, we were in shock [S2 affirmative]. Shock. And there was no emotional support from the clinic. There was no one to talk to. Um, they scheduled us with our doctor in two to three weeks. Um, and that was like squeezing us in. I found out over the portal, like a, nobody called me. It was awful. Um, and at the same time, my sister-in-law had her baby, and so we're like, there were already complicated dynamics within those relationships [S2 affirmative], um, and [nose blowing] excuse me, [not at all]. And it just was another thing [S2 affirmative]. Um, and so, you know, we met with, we met with our doctor and he kind of brought it back like, it's a mystery, you know, we can't really say why it happened. And so they went back and did the same thing. Like the same protocol, didn't change anything, [wow] didn't even do further testing [wow]. And on 11/11 we had our second transfer and surprise, surprise, it did not work.

00:19:46 S2:

Oh, my goodness.

00:19:47 Andrea R:

And, and at that point, it just felt like, are you fucking kidding me? [Right] You're just like throwing these embryos down the drain.

00:19:54 S2:

Right, right.

00:19:55 Andrea R:

What are you doing?

00:19:57 S2:

Right.

00:19:59 Andrea R:

And we were getting, yeah, we were getting really upset and in hindsight, you know, in hindsight we would've left. We should have left the clinic. Um, we should have left the clinic then [S2 affirmative] and transferred our embryos [S2 affirmative]. But they changed the protocol. Now this is all like, um, getting into the fall of 2019. Yeah, well, yeah. 'cause it happened in November and yeah [S2 affirmative] and [S2 affirmative], and it didn't, it didn't take, and so then, um,

00:20:41 Andrea R:

Oh yeah,

00:20:46 Andrea R:

A lot of this I blocked out. So,

00:20:54 Andrea R:

And then, um, we, they started me on Lupron, which, are you familiar with Lupron? [S2 affirmative] Um, it basically puts your ivory or ovaries and hibernation [S2 affirmative], like,

shuts everything down. So I was like experiencing menopausal symptoms [S2 affirmative] hot flashes, um,

00:21:23 Andrea R:

Oh, it was awful.

00:21:25 Andrea R:

They had me on it for three months, and that was, yeah, when I say my story out loud, I'm like, wow, that was fucked up. [laughter].

00:21:38 S2:

Yeah. Yeah.

00:21:40 Andrea R:

Because it's building to an even like more ridiculous climax, which is, um, my transfer was set for March 16th, 2020 [laughter].

00:21:58 S2:

Oh my gosh. Oh my gosh Andrea.

00:22:02 Andrea R:

So, I had been on these meds for 90 days [S2 affirmative], I had started my stimulation meds and on the 13th, March 13th, you know, things are kind of starting to pop up in the news, like, is this gonna be a thing? [right] What's, you know, what does this mean in terms of public health decisions?

00:22:27 S2:

Right.

00:22:28 Andrea R:

And I called our clinic, our transfer was gonna be on that Monday, I called our clinic on Friday and was like, want to check in [S2 affirmative], want, you know, and they, they said, we're gonna, we're proceeding business as usual, et cetera, et cetera. I get a call on Sunday night [no] that they are cancelling my transfer and that they are not moving forward with any further treatments at this time.

00:22:57 S2:

Oh my God.

00:22:59 Andrea R:

Which is so medically irresponsible [yeah] [laughter]. Are you fucking kidding me?

00:23:08 S2:

Yes, your body's already in that process.

00:23:10 Andrea R:

90 days of this medication, this buildup. What? Like, what? And so they put me on a birth control to, um, what they called, like, put me in a holding pattern, quote unquote, to preserve what the medication had already accomplished [S2 affirmative] And [laughter] so here we all are in quarantine, and all of these jokes start coming into the media about like social media or people saying 'em about, oh, you know, oh, all of these quarantine babies. Like when we literally are like, there's no way [S2 affirmative], there's no way that we would, there's no way [S2 affirmative]. And, um, and then, June 2020, they, um, they scheduled, yeah, they scheduled my transfer and said that we can move forward with it. And so we moved forward with it. We had our transfer, and a bizarre thing happened. It was like, have you ever read the book Soul Babies? [S2 negative] Are you familiar with it?

00:24:41 S2:

I'm not familiar, no.

00:24:44 Andrea R:

Um, it was recommended to me by a, a woman, so I started seeing this woman who is a medical intuitive, she has a background in nursing [S2 affirmative], and, um, she does energy work [S2 affirmative]? And so, um, I started seeing her as, yeah, I think it was, I forget if it was before or after my first transfer, but, um, and, and she tapped into so much, she tapped into my, like, unconscious beliefs. Like we, we did so much healing work around my inner child around [S2 affirmative], um, around my limiting beliefs around like healing my diet [S2 affirmative], um like she was able to body scan me and, and pinpoint certain foods that were causing inflammation in my body, um, and really give me like an empowering direction [S2 affirmative]. Um, whereas yeah, I, I felt like I needed to, I needed to be empowered to control what I, what was mine to control [S2 affirmative], and then release the rest.

00:25:07 S2:

[S2 affirmative].

00:25:09 Andrea R:

Um, and so anyway, with this work with her, um, my, my belief system has just like totally [whoosh] opened up. So I was raised Catholic, and, um, I hadn't, I'd heard of like the of past lives or, you know, reincarnation or those sorts of things, but I never really paid much, I never really thought about it a lot [S2 affirmative]. Um, but through some exploration with her, and then also with my own position of trying to call life into this world [S2 affirmative], um, it really brought it to the forefront [S2 affirmative] and, and opened my perspective, which is that there, there is like no doubt about it, there's a scientific medical component to the egg and the sperm and the environment of the ute-, the uterus and the hormones and all of those things. And, when we're controlling all of these, and it's still not happening, like there's something else here too [S2 affirmative]. There's an intersection of, of science and faith and mystery [S2 affirmative], you know. And, and so I felt like, I felt like with this last transfer, the one that happened in June, I felt like what happened is that the medical things aligned [S2 affirmative], that everything worked as it should, that my levels were rising, except they weren't,

00:28:07 Andrea R:

they weren't rising to the degree that they should be [S2 affirmative]. It was like everything was on track, but the soul didn't anchor [S2 affirmative]. And so what I saw, again, I found this out through portal communication, which was a nurse who, that was the day when they were supposed to reach out to me and say, you know, your blood work confirms, or [S2 affirmative] that you have a pregnancy or that you don't. I, and I'm, so, I am on the psychosocial part of the medical team. I'm not in, I'm not in the me- on the medical side [S2 affirmative], so I don't know what those numbers mean [S2 affirmative]. Um, so when she was saying levels are X amount, to me, that was, that was high [S2 affirmative], you know [yeah]. Um, I don't know. I don't know that they're supposed to be like in the thousands or in the hundreds or whatever that is.

00:29:09 S2:

Of course.

00:29:11 Andrea R:

Um, I just know that my levels before were like zero to five [laughter] [S2 affirmative, right]. So anything that's like, you know, 15, 20, that sounds great to me [right]. Um, but that, that wasn't showing a pregnancy that was showing something different [S2 affirmative]. Um, and, and so that pregnancy did not end in a live birth [S2 affirmative]. Um, but it also wasn't technically a pregnancy. It was like, it, it was closer than the others [S2 affirmative], but it wasn't [S2 affirmative]. Um, so at that point in time, we were so ready to leave that clinic [yeah], so ready, like, get us out of here [yeah]. Um, there were, there was even like on the way out, it was just like all this dysfunction, my blood work wasn't ordered, but I had to go to the hospital because that was the only lab that was open before my procedure could take place.

00:30:23 Andrea R:

But when I got to the hospital, they, they hadn't placed the correct order for my blood work. Like it was such a [S2 affirmative] hot mess [yeah]. And it just felt very like on [S2 affirmative] from my experience [S2 affirmative]. So, um, so all of that happened. We left that clinic, and this is, yeah, this is June of 2020. We left that clinic, we transferred our embryo to, um, Gago Center for Fertility [S2 affirmative] in Brighton. And that's where my sister-in-law had gone, which was not the reason we chose her. Um, we had heard success stories from other friends of ours who were in, you know, as we're going through all of this, we had made, made different friends, um, through fertility groups and [S2 affirmative] and just connections through other people [S2 affirmative], um, and so we, um, switched to her and right away, I mean, so many differences.

00:31:29 Andrea R:

So many differences. Now, she was trained at U of M, which I find very curious, um, and interesting because she has the strong education and background, however, she works in her own clinic [S2 affirmative], and so she doesn't have to abide by like institutional protocols [S2 affirmative]. She has the medical freedom to personalize plans. And she did. Um, and she also is so thorough, so thorough, and her bedside manner is amazing. So emotionally we felt supported [S2 affirmative]. Um, and then on both side of things, we felt like she was doing her due diligence, you know? And so after all of, you know, the testing and things that she required, then, um, we were slotted for, uh, I, I did Lupron again. So the reason for Lupron was for, um, the endometriosis [S2 affirmative]. So because it stops, it stops a lot of things, I guess [S2

affirmative], and so it stops, it stops that, but no, you know what I'm remembering, it's a little foggy. I think the reason for that was actually the polycystic ovaries. So I never had like a, a full blown syndrome [S2 affirmative]. Um, but it was something about like the repression, repression, repression, and then like causes this, when the repression stops, it causes the stimulation [S2 affirmative], which she had said, um, was likely why we got pregnant right off of birth control [uh-huh], because I had been repressed, repressed, repressed. And then, yeah. Um, so,

00:33:35 S2:

So I imagine that was a helpful connection for her to draw for you because it pulls on a, a positive sort of successful [Andrea R affirmative] moment, right. To explain what your undertaking in a more challenging time.

00:33:48 Andrea R:

Yeah, [yeah], for sure. Yes. Um,

00:33:58 Andrea R:

and, she, um, I remember we had our, our date set, um

00:34:10 Andrea R:

for the transfer, and it was on a certain day in December, and then the blood work showed that my hormones weren't, um, weren't to the level that she wanted, and so she delayed the transfer a week [S2 affirmative], so it would give my body some time to, um, to cover the gap, what she wanted, cover the spread, [laughter] [laughter]. And, um, and I remember being really upset, and I remember everyone around me being like, this is so good [S2 affirmative], somebody's finally paying attention.

00:34:40 S2:

Right. And adjusting as needed [Andrea R affirmative] like to you specifically.

00:34:45 Andrea R:

Yes [S2 affirmative], yes [S2 affirmative]. Absolutely. And, and it happened, and, and we got a call on Christmas Eve day that we were pregnant.

00:34:59 S2:

Oh, that's wonderful.

00:35:02 Andrea R:

Yeah. It was, it was incredible. And, um, and the day my mom had told me that, um, however many years was that, at that time, it would've been 34 years to that date, that's when she found out she was pregnant with me. And, and so it was a very surreal time being pregnant because I was now upon the other side, quote unquote. I was now amongst people who were pregnant [S2 affirmative] and people that I had envied or been so angry about [S2 affirmative]. Um, you know, at, during the time of going through our fertility treatments, um, a friend of mine who was going through her own struggles with alcohol addiction, um, found out that she was pregnant in

rehab, and it was like the cruelest, like [yeah] kick in the gut, um, as we were going through everything [S2 affirmative], we were going through [S2 affirmative].

00:35:43 Andrea R:

Um, and so I was finally like there, but it just, it, it's a lot to come down from [S2 affirmative], um, and it's still there. I mean, the wounds are, this scars are still there. It was a trauma, [of course], all of it, [of course]. Um, and yeah, it was a trauma and, um, I was sick during my pregnancy, migraines were awful. Um, but didn't, two things can be true, it could, I can be really grateful for my pregnancy. And also it was really hard.

00:37:41 S2:

Of course.

00:37:41 Andrea R:

Um, I wasn't somebody who was like, like, there are people that love being pregnant, [laughter]. That was not my experience [S2 affirmative]. Um, [nose blowing] and, and so after going through this heavily saturated medical experience, I really wanted to reclaim her birth and [S2 affirmative], I knew my husband wouldn't be like, and I had a few hesitations about like home birth, um, but going with a midwife, um, and, and seeking out doula support was like our compromise [S2 affirmative]. And so we actually had, um, Sarah Brennan [S2 affirmative] as our, our doula. And, and I went through, we went through, um, a hypnobirthing class [S2 affirmative], which was incredible. Um, like this whole image of, of breathing the baby out and allowing my body to be relaxed in the water and for the baby to just like, [S2 affirmative] go from amniotic fluid to like the gentle pool of this [S2 affirmative], uh, this water birth felt so like what I wanted [S2 affirmative]. And so we planned and we, I knew that I didn't want to labor very long at the hospital, that I was gonna do what I could to stay, um, to labor at home and then go there, have the baby, and then get back home because I don't need the hospital telling me what to do [S2 affirmative], um, [laughter] [S2 affirmative, yeah].

00:38:50 Andrea R:

And so we, the yeah, the pregnancy itself, she progressed beautifully. Um, and then there was it during this birthing hypnobirthing class, um, there was a woman who, uh, one other woman in this class with me, and she and her husband were doing a home birth, and, um, they were due two weeks before. Now, I'll also just say that I really, especially being on this side of it, like I really don't like the term due date. Like, what does that even mean? [laughter] as you are, like, hearing all these stories too [S2 affirmative], it's such a false, it's a misnomer. Like what, what? What we're putting like a due date on this being [S2 affirmative] to be expelled from uterus. They don't know. They're gonna come when they come [yeah]. And, and I did fully believe that, and so [S2 affirmative],

00:40:54 Andrea R:

Um, my, this woman, Emily is her name. She had her baby via home birth. Um, she was, we were texting about it a little bit and, and she was like, you, I'd love to share more if you're interested. And I was like, oh my gosh. Yes. So we hopped on a call and as we are on this call, I [laughter] I felt like I was peeing, but I wasn't [laughter]. I said to her, I was like, I think my

water just, well, they, they're really careful on language in the hypno, hypno-, are you familiar with [S2 affirmative]? Yeah. So like, my water's released, nothing's broken.

00:41:38 S2:

That's right.

00:41:40 Andrea R:

My water's released. Um, and I was like, I think my water's just released. I think I'm gonna call my husband [laughter]. And so, um, and so I called him and I remember it was like the middle of the day on Friday, like around noon. He was like, okay, well, um, I'll wrap things up here. I'm like, I don't think you need to rush. You know, do what you need to do [S2 affirmative]. Um, and so I just like, I was like, but I do need like really heavy pads or like adult diapers, [laughter]. This is not anything that I was prepared for. This is crazy [yeah]. And so I called my midwife and we went to, uh, triage that night [S2 affirmative]. Um, and, and I, I'm trying to remember if I knew at that time, I don't feel like we packed, I feel like they said just get the baby checked [S2 affirmative], because I don't feel like we packed [S2 affirmative]. So we went, they checked whatever they check and then,

00:43:05 Andrea R:

and they, they said, you know, if you're comfortable, you, you have two choices. You can either choose to stay here or you can go home and come back within 24 hours of when your water broke, so then come back and be here by 11 [S2 affirmative]. Um, and, and so we elected to go home and I slept in my own bed. I took a bath [S2 affirmative], you know, did all [nice] of the things [S2 affirmative], um, and, and that was lovely. And we, you know, had a little, little moment with our dog, [laughter] like, you're not gonna be the only one [laughter].

00:43:45 S2:

Get used to it.

00:43:47 Andrea R:

Yeah. [laughter]. Um, yeah. Which felt emotional because she was like, our baby.

00:43:54 S2:

Yeah, yeah, of course.

00:43:59 Andrea R:

Um, and she, so yeah, we went to the next morning we went to Anna's House [local restaurant] for breakfast. Like we packed a cooler with snacks, um, and food. 'cause that was another thing. And I guess if there was one thing that, uh, the clinic really showed us, it's that the healthcare system doesn't give a fuck about what you eat [S2 affirmative]. Um, and even when I asking about like their vegan options or things like that, a woman on the phone from food services was like, um, we have those Amy's burritos. I was like, like the ones that you microwave.

00:44:45 S2:

And she was like, she was like, yeah, yeah. That's how we prepare them. [laughter], I was like, [laughter] you are joking. Like, this is horrible. I felt like because I experienced such horrendous

migraines during this pregnancy, my midwife had to like, consult with high risk OB [S2 affirmative]. Um, and so I also felt like my, um, just my belief set was just being challenged of like, there's a place for both [S2 affirmative], um, and, and that I could feel gratitude that, you know, there were people that could make that decision of like the way that, or make the cost benefit analysis of like drug and fetal exposure [S2 affirmative] and like my own pain [S2 affirmative] because it would not have been helpful to my baby for me to be like in that kind of pain or vomiting [S2 affirmative] because of this migraine and not able to, you know, give her the nutrition she needs. And so it's, um, yeah, it was a, it was a lot. And, and, and at the same time I so wanted like a birth free from them.

00:46:14 S2:

[S2 affirmative]

00:46:18 Andrea R:

And, um, and so when we went back, um, we just kind of hung out, you know, there wasn't anything going on. They didn't check me. I knew I had done a lot of my own, um, empowered reading, if you will [S2 affirmative], um, like I wasn't gonna have unnecessary fetal monitoring. I wasn't gonna have like your random cervical checks [S2 affirmative], um, and, and what the heck does that even mean a cervical check? That is a really nice way to say like the most invasive [S2 affirmative], like [laughter]

00:46:59 S2:

Yes, absolutely.

00:47:00 Andrea R:

female medical figuring experience [yes]. What the heck [yes].

00:47:05 Andrea R:

Um, and so that night, um, Sarah [doula] came, she brought dinner, we had dinner, we just kind of wound down and I took a, I took a bath. I took a bath and no, I don't even know, I, we went to bed. I can't remember if I took a bath at that point and went to bed. I don't think I did. I had a tub room, that's another piece of this [S2 affirmative], I had a tub room. Um, so we wound down to bed and then at midnight I remember feeling like the contractions coming on, like pretty, to a point where I couldn't ignore them [S2 affirmative] or couldn't just like, breathe through them and go back to sleep. Like, I was like, okay. So we got up, got in the tub, um, did some breathing, Sarah, you know, like rubbed my shoulders. Um, I wanted to let my husband sleep. He did end up waking up on his own, I don't know, two in the morning or something, and he was actually pretty upset that I didn't wake him up. [Laughter]

00:48:26 Andrea R:

Yeah. He kind of felt like, um, he's like, he kind of felt like, this is my kid too [S2 affirmative], even though it's happening in your body. Like, I wanna be a part of this and I also wanna feel like the decisions are happening between you and me and not like you and Sarah [S2 affirmative] kind of thing [S2 affirmative], um, which is fair [S2 affirmative]. And so at some point in the middle of the night, yeah. Three in the morning maybe. Um, the midwife came, or like the nurse

had come when I had my contractions, and then the midwife came later and wanted to check. And at that time I had spiked a, a fever [S2 affirmative].

00:49:31 Andrea R:

And, and so I remember getting out of the tub and I like, could not regulate my temperature. I was so cold [S2 affirmative], like my body first was so hot in the bath, and then I got out and it was so cold, like teeth chattering [S2 affirmative], like so cold [wow]. Um, [nose blowing] and I forget at what point, oh yeah and then at that point they had talked about, um, I forget if they told me I had a fever, they probably did, that I had a fever and that indicates an infection [S2 affirmative] and, um, and that there were, you know, two ways that we could discuss, like helping to move the pregnant or move the birth along. And, um, and I was pretty clear about not wanting Pitocin [S2 affirmative]. And so the natural way would be the Foley balloon [S2 affirmative], which, have you experienced that ,or you know of it?

00:50:50 S2:

I do. I I, I am a doula, so I know about a lot of interventions.

00:50:55 Andrea R:

Oh, you're a doula.

00:50:56 S2:

Yeah. Yeah. So, um, it helps me in this work because I know what people are talking about. [laughter]. I did, I did not have a Foley balloon myself with my own, uh, birth. But, um, but I, I know what it is and how it works.

00:51:12 Andrea R:

Oh my gosh. Okay. Well, when it was presented to me as like a more natural option [S2 affirmative], oh well then naturally we would go with that [yes]. There's nothing natural about sticking, like it's not a medicated option.

00:51:30 S2:

That's right. [laughter], that's the word. It's non-medicated [laughter].

00:51:34 Andrea R:

Yes.

00:51:36 S2:

Yes.

00:51:37 Andrea R:

Um, so I, I said, yeah, we could do that if, you know, if it doesn't progress [S2 affirmative]. And so, at some point they tried to give me the Foley balloon, but it like, wouldn't, that's right, when the, when the midwife checked me at that time, she also tried to insert the Foley balloon and it wouldn't, something was, was not working with it, and so she wasn't able to do it. And so then they said, okay, well let's monitor or like, give you time and then in the morning we can check and try again. And so they did like the, um, the contractions just kind of stayed the same, died

down a little bit, like came back up [S2 affirmative], like it wasn't, just kind of, yeah, maintained the same.

00:52:42 Andrea R:

And then, um, at some point in the morning they came back and attempted the Foley balloon and I, out of everything, out of all of the fertility stuff that we have gone through, out of all, I'm no stranger to pain [S2 affirmative], especially in that area [S2 affirmative]. That is the most painful thing that I have ever experienced.

00:53:18 S2:

Wow.

00:53:20 Andrea R:

Hands down, was that Foley balloon. And, and at that point I was like demanding the epidural, like demanding [S2 affirmative] and, um, which I wanted a water birth. I didn't want any of this [laughter]. [S2 affirmative] And so, um, so they gave me an epidural and I was able to get some sleep, maybe two hours or something [S2 affirmative]. And then, um, I woke up and there wasn't a ton of progression. It was just like I was staying, I think 'cause the Foley gets you to four centimeters or something like that [S2 affirmative]. Um, and they were showing, um, I think they did have the monitor on me at that point, and it was like, I would try different positions, you know, I was on all fours, I was on my side, I was, and it would be okay for a little bit, and then her heart rate would drop again. And it was just like, nothing was really, um, nothing just seemed like it was working [S2 affirmative] and my, the labor just wasn't progressing [S2 affirmative]. Um, and so at that point, it was noon.

00:55:00 Andrea R:

I remember having a conversation, like I could tell they, they wanted so badly to just like respect our wishes, give us space and, and you know, I think our midwife, we talked with our midwife and, and we were just like seeing the writing on the wall, like where this could be moving towards [S2 affirmative] and, um, and we-, what my husband was saying is like, we don't want it to be an emergency situation [S2 affirmative]. Um, and, and so we like asked them all, we asked what our options were, which would be waiting, continuing to wait to which it could turn into an emergency situation where we then have a C-section or we, um, elect to do a C-section then [S2 affirmative]. Um, because it, if we choose to wait, the likelihood there's a slim likelihood that she could come, but I, I continued to not progress [S2 affirmative]. Um, and so that was, um, not, it was not something, it was not something that they saw, like without saying it, they said it [S2 affirmative].

00:56:57 Andrea R:

Like, you know, the progression is to this stage. You know, in this many hours, you know, your, your water broke here and this many hours, you're, you were not four centimeters [S2 affirmative]. You have an infection, now you are at like, I think I reached four centimeters and the Foley balloon fell out like that afternoon or something like that, but [S2 affirmative], it was just like, it was so hard for me to wrap my brain around because I didn't know what to do. Like, I didn't know what the natural option would be. I didn't know, like what if I was birthing at home, would I then be on my way to the hospital [S2 affirmative]. Um, so we, Greg and I had a

moment where we just like had a meeting, just the two of us. We shut everyone out of the room and, and we just cried [S2 affirmative].

00:057:59 Andrea R:

Because [it was like, we've come this far [S2 affirmative], we've done all of this. This is not the birth we want [laughter] [S2 affirmative] And, and yet it was the exact opposite of the birth we wanted [S2 affirmative] and the exact opposite of the way we wanted to get pregnant [yeah]. All of it. And so, um, yeah, we, we had our moment, we cried and, and we said that if this is the direction it's going, then we don't want it to be an emergency [S2 affirmative] getting there [S2 affirmative].

00:58:45 Andrea R:

And so, um, I think they, that was, that decision was made 12:30 or 01:00ne, and they had us in the OR at 3:00 [S2 affirmative]. Um, and I still don't know what happened. I wanted, I had advocated for delayed cord clamping [S2 affirmative] for the varnix not to be like wiped off, like for all of those things [S2 affirmative]. I can almost guarantee that there was not delayed cord clamping, especially with the jaundice that she faced in the week following. Um, but it was a very surreal, somewhat sedated moment, [laughter] holding her for the first time [S2 affirmative], um, yeah, it was, it was crazy. It was like meeting, like meeting a stranger you've known all along.

01:00:03 S2:

[S2 affirmative]

01:00:05 Andrea R:

Um, she had so much hair, [laughter], so much hair. They were, um, getting her cleaned up and weighing her and all of that stuff. And, um, and Greg said that he was talking, and she just shot [laughter] her little head over, like I know that voice. And, um, and the anesthesia team back in the OR was really lovely, um, I do work with them and, um, and I knew, I knew a handful of them and one of them that I knew had I had given my phone to, and so she took our first family photos and she got some good ones on there.

01:00:54 S2:

[laughter]. Good, good

01:00:54 Andrea R:

I'll share them with you.

01:00:56 S2:

Oh, I'd love to see them.

01:00:59 Andrea R:

Yeah. Um, and now that she's here, we're, we've been immersed in her, you know [S2 affirmative]. She's almost 21 months. She'll be two in August.

01:01:11 S2:

Hard to believe right? Hard to believe.

01:01:16 Andrea R:

Yeah. And I think part of my like emotion too is that she, um, this is also the time when people who had kids around the same time as I did with Charlotte, um, are having their, their next kid [yeah]. And, um, and we just, we just have a lot of, a lot of sadness, a lot of question, a lot of unknown [S2 affirmative], um, yeah, we really like emotionally, physically, financially don't have interest in going back to [S2 affirmative] a fertility clinic.

01:02:03 Andrea R:

Um, [nose blowing] and so I really like embraced the food as medicine, um [S2 affirmative] path to healing and, and recognize that this is not a life sentence [S2 affirmative], um, that plenty of people, especially those with mystery, uh, fertility go on to have their own spontaneous pregnancies [S2 affirmative].

01:02:38 S2:

Absolutely.

01:02:40 Andrea R:

And so, um, maintaining patience and faith in, in the process is, is proving to be, is challenging when, um, some of the old stuff comes up and I, I don't have, um, the same, my life doesn't look the same in terms of like gaping holes of time where I can just deeply reflect [laughter] [S2 affirmative]. She pulls us right into the present moment.