

**00:00:00 Speaker 1:**

Okay. So we know this is your second birth that you shared with us, so I'm wondering if you feel comfortable talking a little about your decision to expand your family from [oh] one to a second.

**00:00:10 Sarah B:**

Mm-hmm. So we always knew that we wanted more than one. I actually was leaning towards four, and Terry was leaning towards two. So funny that we landed on three [laughter]. Um, and our first was complicated 'cause he had health issues. Um, and things were just kind of crazy with him. But, um, I, he was like still so little, and Terry was like, I mean, if we're gonna do this again, like, it is crazy, let's just keep the crazy coming? And I was like, [laughter], I mean, I see the science in that, but I don't know. So, um, yeah, so Juliet was a super quick, successful second pregnancy. Like as soon as we, like, as soon as I went off breast con-, like I was like, all right, well, let's just see. I mean, it's not like it's gonna happen right away. And then it did. Yeah. So she was, um, she was very planned, but I think it was also, um, we hadn't done two kids before, so we were, you know, we didn't have, um, all the information. But then it worked out really well and they, you know, when it was like having two babies for, for a long time. And, but I don't know. I'm really, I'm like on this side of it super glad that that's how, that that's how their lives started.

**00:01:24 S1:**

So that leads nicely into my second question, and I want you to really, you know, be mindful of how comfortable you are talking about all of this, but, um, you did also mention in your first interview that there was, as you put it, a lot going on [S2 affirmative] when you were pregnant with Juliet and getting ready for that delivery. So I'm wondering if you feel comfortable talking a little bit more about what that means. What was that “a lot going on?”

**00:01:46 Sarah B:**

Yeah, so our first, um, child, uh, James, um, is 18 months older than Juliet. And when he was in utero at our 20-week ultrasound, we, they saw something questionable, um, about his heart, but we didn't really know what it was. So then we went and like, had further testing and they found that it, like, indeed, like his, his heart wasn't quite right. They had some guesses about it, but they knew they wouldn't know for sure until he was born. We did some genetic testing with him. Um, so then he came and what he had was gonna require two surgeries. One at, um, they guessed like six months-ish and the other one at 18 months-ish. So, um, so we knew as I got more pregnant with Juliet into his 18th month, um, we knew that it was coming up, but we didn't know, like still weren't totally sure when that was gonna happen [S1 affirmative].

**00:02:48 Sarah B:**

And, um, and I just felt like that is so many of us recovering from things [laughter] like [S1 affirmative], it was, yeah, it just felt like I to know when she was coming so that I could plan out better like when the doctor said, okay, it's time to set that surgery date for him, that I could, you know, to the best of our ability schedule it when like I was recovered from, you know, recovered quote unquote, um, from having baby number two. So, um, yeah, so that did happen. So he, he didn't have surgery until mid-December and she was born, uh, end of September. So we did have about, about nine to 10 weeks to recover before he had surgery. So that worked out well.

**00:03:39 S1:**

So can I ask then, how, how did it, and maybe this isn't, maybe this didn't register with you in this way at the time, but how did that feel for you during your pregnancy with Juliet too, that sort of uncertainty? You knew this, you know [S2 affirmative], heart surgery is major, and, and I I hear that it sounds like you had already gone through one with James [S2 affirmative], but you know, each one is nerve wracking [yes] it's not like you get used to it, I'm sure. So I wonder how that felt to you to be carrying, I'm just gonna put it this way [S1 affirmative] caring for one baby in and one baby out.

**00:04:13 Sarah B:**

Um

**00:04:13 S1:**

or maybe work isn't the word for it.

**00:04:15 Sarah B:**

No, I mean, it, it did, like we all figured it out. It was, um, there was a lot of like divide and conquer, like with Terry and I, um, in the beginning. And James was at a stage, um, where like he was very mama centric, like at the 18 month stage, you know [S1 affirmative]. And so before she came, you know, like I feel, I don't know, I think it's, I've seen it I guess in other people's children, like the 16 month to two year, like very, we're very mama centric or that's what I've seen in toddlers. So he was definitely there. And so it, um, so we had to force some, some more daddy time in preparation for the baby. So we did do that a lot. Like we practiced a lot if he wanted his shoes on and mama to do it, then we'd say, no, daddy has to help you.

**00:05:03 Sarah B:**

You know? And so we really tried to get him to rely more on Terry, so that like, in preparation for like, knowing that I wouldn't be able to pick him up right after the c-section and [S1 affirmative], um, you know, just trying to, yeah so actually I remember that. Yeah, that was, so that was one of the ways, and then like, once we got the all clear on her, um, like after her 20 week ultrasound, like I felt like I just, like wasn't really worried about her. Like, I don't know, like, you know, I had already done the newborn thing, and so like, I knew like, listen, she's gonna come, she's gonna eat, she's gonna sleep, we're gonna change her diaper, like [S1 affirmative], she's, she's gonna be okay. And, um, I guess I, I kind of just knew that she was gonna come and, and be chill and be okay, like [S1 affirmative], um, yeah, I felt really peaceful about who, about who she was. And it was just like a blur, you know, like, um there was just so much else going on, you know? [S1 affirmative], I mean, I had my due date straight, but if someone asked me like how pregnant I was, I'd be like, well, due in September, how pregnant was that? [laughter]

**00:06:11 S1:**

Can you do the math for me? I'm overwhelmed.

**00:06:12 Sarah B:**

Yeah. You tell me. Just I can do more or less than 20 weeks. And that's [laughter] where I'm at with that one you know? I think she's a plum, or maybe she's an avocado. I don't know. [laughter], it's a watermelon now, so

**00:06:25 S1:**

She feels like a watermelon. Does that help you?

**00:06:25 Sarah B:**

She feels like a watermelon. Yeah. Um, yeah and I was like, still, I was working night shift and, you know, it was hard and my body kind of hurt, but I don't know, like it's amazing what our bodies can do and you know, when we're willing and able to wrap our minds around it [S1 affirmative] what our minds can do [S1 affirmative]. And then like another part of it was like, I feel totally overwhelmed. I don't know. Like, sure, let's have another, let's do another baby. [laughter]. It is crazy. You're right, Terry. Let's make it crazier.

**00:06:56 S1:**

So it, with your first, and, and obviously pregnancies are not comparative, but a first experience that has that added challenge of a [S1 affirmative] of a medical, you know, what do I wanna say? Vulnerability.

**00:07:11 Sarah B:**

Great word.

**00:07:12 S1:**

Does that sound [yeah], does that sound accurate? I, I can imagine that that would be hard to go into a second pregnancy, um, kind of open to what comes, but it sounds to me like you did.

**00:07:23 Sarah B:**

Yeah.

**00:07:24 S1:**

Like you didn't go into it sort of bracing for what would come.

**00:07:27 Sarah B:**

Yes. Also, I went, um, after my first, I had, um, like a, a good amount of, um, postpartum depression. And so I like got help before Juliet came to [S1 affirmative] to try to like prevent that or like learn what I could do to like, to care for myself and them like, um, like preemptively [S1 affirmative]. So, um, so that was, that was like really good. It was really empowering. I went to, um, what is that? There's like a mental health place out on Plymouth and they do some specialized like, um, anyway, um, postpartum. And so I went to see them and then I also went to see a, a therapist and um, and they were all just like really supportive [S1 affirmative] like this is, and um, and the psychiatrist that I saw, he said, you know, I think there are two really different thing, like very different like situations happening.

**00:08:30 Sarah B:**

And like, I actually think like your postpartum depression with James was more of like situational versus like, how your body, like, I don't think that that confirms that that's how your body handles postpartum [S1 affirmative] that, that it was more situational and, and the therapist agreed that it was actually probably more like PTSD [S1 affirmative]. But yeah. So, um, so then that felt like really like, like I did some things to get some ducks in a row or like poop in a group and that, um, [laughter] and that felt good. And like I had done some things to, to help this go as well as, as it could go and as well as [S1 affirmative], her story was meant to go.

**00:09:11 S1:**

So with that in mind, I'm curious, as you made that plan then to schedule that c-section, what were some of the things you like, what were the things you wanted to know about it in order to make that decision best for you?

**00:09:21 Sarah B:**

So I already like, like the c-section was the way I knew already because I had had one. Um, so like, there was, there was a certain bit of, uh, familiarity with that. So that felt less, that felt less scary just because I had done that. Um, and then, so I saw the nurse midwives at U of M, um, for all three of the pregnancies. And so I was speaking to them about it and just asked like, if I do choose c-section this way, um, does that, does that take for future like, um, vaginal births off the table? Because I have heard of like, um, vbac, but I didn't know if I had heard of times two, like [S1 affirmative], I felt like maybe I had heard from someone, like, you know, once you've had X amount, like you are at c-section mom, like that's, you know, and whether that was like, you know, kind of mom to mom information or wherever that was scientific, I'm not sure [laughter], but, um, but you know, that was the pattern I had seen in others.

**00:10:30 Sarah B:**

So [00:10:30] I asked, and the midwife said like, you know, the science shows that like, we can do this and as a practice, like we are willing to, to go down that path with you in the future if that's what you would choose. And, you know, you know, there's some risks with that, but, you know, risks, there are risks with everything. And she even like gave me like the, the information packet that they like, have prepared for women who are interested in VBACs. So I like got that before it was even, you know something and they said, um, you know, it's not super common, but it's not impossible. And, you know, we don't find that it's like that your risks are, you know, super, like there isn't a big change between one to two, I guess [S1 affirmative] and that, and that the midwives themselves are willing to do that with me, that it didn't put me in some sort of high risk group or, um, something like that. And they just said like, you know what, it would entail that, you know, I would probably have to do most of my labor at the hospital to just like monitor for any weakness in my, um, uterus after it, like healing twice from two c-sections. Um, but yeah, that just gave me like, okay, so I'm not like, making this choice today doesn't change my choices in the future [S1 affirmative], and that felt really, that felt really good.

**00:11:51 S1:**

It sounds like being able to potentially deliver vaginally in the future was important to you.

**00:11:56 Sarah B:**

Yeah.

**00:11:56 S1:**

Were there other concerns that were also important to you about it? Or was that sort of like your piece [that was like]? As long as that was preserved you know

**00:12:04 Sarah B:**

That was my big piece and then that, um, you know, like just the difference in James' birth, which, you know, involved like an urgent C-section and him being like taken away [S1 affirmative] to have the test he needed to have to determine like what his like danger level essentially was [S1 affirmative], um, you know, that that would be different. Like [S1 affirmative], if everyone looks good, can she just be, you know, like with me. And she's like, of course. And like, we can even like start breastfeeding right away and you know, like she had all these wonderful things that like, um, you know, that moms post c-section can do. And um, so it was almost like she helped me make a, like a postpartum birth plan [S1 affirmative], you know, because, um, and not that like the cesarean wasn't like my birth plan, but, you know, I think, uh, when it's a vaginal birth plan, like maybe there are more details for like the birth room and the labor and those things. Um, but mine had more to do with, um, after, and they were all, so like, I just remember like all the nurses and the doc, like everyone involved was super like, encouraging and respectful of like, what it was that I wanted.

**00:13:18 Sarah B:**

Oh my gosh. They were so good. Like, it was so smooth. They had music on, like, we were like having a dis- like a chat [laughter] and um, and then, you know, they were like, okay, we're gonna just, we're quick weighing her and doing a fast check. She's right here crying pink, beautiful dad's right by her, we're bringing her to you, you know, like [S1 affirmative], like, they just talked it all out and, um, and then like tucked her in even though I was still like in a funny position. And, um, and so then we were just like the three of us just like together behind that curtain while they were finishing the surgery and um, yeah. And then we moved into, uh, recovery and she just like stayed right with us and ate right away, right away and yeah, like, yeah, just did great.

**00:14:03 S1:**

Great. So she stayed with you while they closed you back up?

**00:14:06 Sarah B:**

Yes. I think, um, like they did a, you know, they said like, you know, as long as like baby looks pink and good, like we'll do all of that stuff. We'll just triple check her. So, um, but she had already had, like, we already did some, we did an ultrasound of her heart before [S1 affirmative] birth, because that's another thing that you get once you have a baby with heart stuff is everybody else, everybody else gets a test [S1 affirmative]. So, um, so we were pretty confident that she was gonna look good and she did. So. Yeah, so she got to be right there.

**00:14:37 S1:**

And was that test, was that test reassuring to you to see? Or was that more a concern that you feel your providers had for it for you and for the care baby than you necessarily felt?

**00:14:47 Sarah B:**

Um, that's a good question. I guess I'm having a hard time remembering back to those feelings [S1 affirmative]. I don't remember being stressed or anticipating anything [S1 affirmative], like with her, she that all like, well, because they had done the genetic testing with James, they were like pretty sure that like what what had happened was a fluke versus genetics. [S1 affirmative]. So, you know, they said we had very low, um, probability of [S1 affirmative] that happening again in our family. Um, so yeah, I don't, um, I don't remember being worried about her.

**00:15:25 S1:**

Okay. So then, uh, we talked about how you and Juliet were alone for that first night.

**00:15:30 Sarah B:**

Yeah, mm-hmm.

**00:15:31 S1:**

And so it was unclear to me in listening back if you were only there one night in the hospital.

**00:15:35 Sarah B:**

Um, that's a good question.

**00:15:40 S1:**

[laughter].

**00:15:43 Sarah B:**

I mean, it was probably I two, but I mean, I think we were alone both nights and I, you know, like, I mean, I know because I'm a pediatric nurse that we never want, we always are worried about co-sleeping, but I was like, she's gonna have to be here with me 'cause unless you guys want me to call you every 20 minutes. So [laughter]. So they're like, okay, if it's like this and we'll check on you. And I was like, great.

**00:16:11 S1:**

Well, it also sounds, as you put it, like Juliet knew how to function in the world from the get.

**00:16:16 Sarah B:**

[laughter].

**00:16:17 S1:**

Yeah?

**00:16:17 Sarah B:**

Mm-hmm.

**00:16:19 S1:**

And you mentioned that was different than your first experience. So again, without going into too much detail, um, about that experience in terms of those early newborn days, did you mean different for you or did you mean she was different? Like she had a different experience of the world than, than your first baby?

**00:16:36 Sarah B:**

Both.

**00:16:37 S1:**

Both.

**00:16:38 Sarah B:**

Yeah. She was

**00:16:40 S1:**

Can you tell me a little more about that?

**00:16:41 Sarah B:**

She was, um, she was just like hearty, you know, like she just, you know, like she understood her job. Like, got it, I'm gonna eat, do a great job eating and go to the bathroom. I'm gonna sleep, I'm gonna to

**00:16:56 S1:**

Really knock out that bathroom thing for you.

**00:16:58 Sarah B:**

I'm gonna really, yeah. I'm gonna do the things I'm supposed to, gonna do 'em. And I found her to be a pretty, uh, easy ba- like, I mean, none of my kids were like those babies that sleep seven hours in a row at night. No. So she was like, she was a hungry baby, and she ate and yeah. And she was just like, she was, yeah, she was hearty like she was [S1 affirmative] um, like I teased, you can't, you can't trust a skinny baby and [laughter], and that was James. He was a skinny baby. Don't trust him. [laughter]. But those, but those chubby babies, you know, like she just had, yeah. She was, she was good.

**00:17:41 S1:**

And how did that change it for you as, as a new, and not, you're not a new parent, but a, [yeah] a parent newly to this person?

**00:17:48 Sarah B:**

It was really, um, it was really interesting. Like I knew, um, like, I think probably like, you know, a couple weeks in, I feel like, you know, those first two weeks are just always such a blur. Like, who knows some weird time warp that you're in [S1 affirmative]. And then, um, so at the, like, like even at like the three-week mark, you know, like, I think there is something in those first two weeks where like, your hormones are like, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa. Like a little cuckoo. But, um, like I knew I didn't have postpartum depression. Like I knew I was

overwhelmed, [laughter], this was pretty hard that I was sleep deprived. That, um, you know, sometimes I cried more than I wanted to, but like, I [laughter], but like, I knew it wasn't depression, you know, like it felt different. Like the way it felt with James was like, my world had broken and I didn't know if it would ever fix. And with her, it was just like, this is a fun new challenge [laughter], you know?

**00:18:55 S1:**

Is it fun [laughter]?

**00:18:57 Sarah B:**

I, I feel kind of crazy, but I don't feel in like a, the dark hole that I felt that first time. And so that like, so that felt really good, like [S1 affirmative] and I just, yeah, I felt healthier. Like, even though, yeah, there were some crazy challenges. Like it, like I felt more like myself [S1 affirmative] in it. I think it did have something to do with being a second parent, right. Because like a lot of that stuff that's so overwhelming about the first is way different the second time, right? Like [S1 affirmative], I knew she was gonna sleep a lot. Like I knew that like breastfeeding was gonna be like, you know, I mean for, for me it was always like a bit painful in the beginning [S1 affirmative].

**00:19:44 Sarah B:**

Um, you know, like, but I was ready for that. Like, oh, that hurts, like that. I know what I need to ask for [laughter], you know, like [S1 affirmative]. So, um, and I felt like I could anticipate her needs better [S1 affirmative] than, you know, the fir- like, there's, so, there's such a huge learning curve that first time, like [S1 affirmative] just to get your, to know yourself as a parent and just all the brand new stuff. And the second is a challenge just in a different way. But, um, yeah. So I felt much more secure in my own like, skills to like, care for this infant that's now for you to care for [S1 affirmative]. Like, so I felt confident that like, she gonna be fine. Okay, [laughter], she's fussing a little bit, we're gonna finish this up [S1 affirmative]. She's gonna make it, she can make it [S1 affirmative] 10 more minutes, we're gonna finish this up, get to her, you know, like [S1 affirmative], you just, um, yeah, I just had a better understanding.

**00:20:35 Sarah B:**

And then, yeah, and then I mean, feeling more like myself and not in the same mental health space. Like, I mean, that was a whole, that what was incredible. I think that becoming a mom made me a better nurse. Like, [interesting] big time. I mean like the ability to, you know, it's like that saying like, you're a better parent before you're a parent, you know, like [S1 affirmative], I had a lot of different feelings about different things parents were doing at the hospital. I feel like after James, I was like, you're doing a great job, [laughter]. You're here, you're, everything you're doing is wonderful. [laughter].

**00:21:18 S1:**

So you feel, when you say better as a nurse, that it made you, um, better in a holistic sense.

**00:21:24 Sarah B:**

Yes.



**00:21:24 S1:**

At being nursing. So not like better at the skills of nursing?

**00:21:28 Sarah B:**

No, not necessarily. No. I mean, I, I don't know what made me better being a night nurse or being a mom, but I'm gonna tell you what, I have some mad skills. Yeah. There's, there's just so many complicated emotions and feelings that come with motherhood and, um, unfortunately guilt is a big one. And, um, I think just like the idea of feeling like confident and, um, finding some confidence and peace in like, what works for you and works for your baby [S1 affirmative]. You know, like [S1 affirmative], like choosing that c-section is what worked the best for, like, for my family, for me. Like, it was the right, like, it was a, I feel really peaceful and confident that it was the right medical decision. Like it was the right decision to make. And I just feel like we so often, we do so much comparing, you know, like of ourselves to others and, um, yeah, so just like, like whatever you're doing, if it works for you and your baby, then it's the right thing to do [S1 affirmative]. So if it's co-sleeping, if it's crying it out, if it's breastfeeding, if it's bottle feeding, if it's vaginal, if it's c-section, like, I don't know. Healthy mom, happy baby.