# - Pallavi Sastry - After Birth

Episode 139 · October 10, 2019 · with Pallavi Sastry

IN THIS EPISODE

Actress, entrepreneur and fellow podcaster Pallavi Sastry returns to share her after-birth story with Dr. Elliot Berlin, DC. After deciding late in pregnancy to switch from a hospital birth to a home birth, Pallavi is ready and waiting — and waiting — a full week past her estimated due date, trying acupuncture, extra chiropractic visits and an induction reflexology massage to get things rolling. When labor finally begins, she takes us hour by hour through a long early labor at home, and afterwards she keeps it real about the parts nobody warned her about: the identity shift of new motherhood, breastfeeding that did not come instinctually, and learning to build her own village.

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**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** Welcome to the informed pregnancy and parenting podcast. I'm your host. Dr. Elliot Berlin and our guest today is an actress entrepreneur and Fellow podcaster and now brand-new mama Paula V. Sastry. Welcome back to the podcast. I'm happy to be back Well, you look different

**PALLAVI SASTRY:** Yeah, you mean I don't have like a protrusion on my body anymore. I still have a protrusion I couldn't quite put my finger on it. But yeah, you look amazing and energized

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** Interestingly enough. Well, I bless you for saying that I think last two nights was the first night

**PALLAVI SASTRY:** I got maybe five hours straight of sleep at one time. That must be it. It must be So last time we saw you you were baby inside. Yep, and you had changed your whole birth plan around Yeah, I think when I was here I was still set to deliver in a hospital and I had a monetaries Abby Vidican who I got through you. Thank you very much. Sure and Yeah, I was gonna I was doing squats. I that's true I was doing 300 a day cuz I know may tell me did you make it to 300 a day? Um, I know I tried to get to 300 a day I mean, I will be honest and say the last like two and a half weeks. I was just like I'm just gonna take a walk for 10 minutes 200 squats a day now

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** It's a number

**PALLAVI SASTRY:** High number of squats all the way towards the end. Yeah, you know, I try to I try to do my best to Maintain my health and I'm pretty vigilant about you know, trying to stay healthy and it's a passion of mine So I I need to give that passion

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** So you had a monetaries which we actually just had an episode with Abby I'm talking about monetaries, which is sort of like a mix between doula and midwife ish because doulas are not medical people Midwives are your primary medical provider typically when you hire them and Monetaries is in between where you hire your midwife to be your labor support person with Monitoring benefits and they can monitor you and your vital signs your baby and their vital signs or heart tones And then your cervix and see how labor may be progressing and that was a great plan, but it changed it did

**PALLAVI SASTRY:** Yeah you know I did like the idea of I think the reason why I hired a monetaries in the first place is because I Liked the idea that I could have somebody else advocating for me because I was already going into The idea of hospital birth thinking okay, there's gonna be things that I'm not gonna be familiar with that They might throw at me, you know, like it's not gonna be the most Familiar setting and I to be quite honest have never been admitted to the hospital for anything in my life I'm very fortunate to have again. Like I said it like pretty good health and Yeah, and I do work really hard to take care of myself And I think the the worst that's ever gone is like, you know

**PALLAVI SASTRY:** You know walk myself into the ER or hobble myself into the ER after a dance injury one year And you know to get some x-rays and make sure that my knee wasn't broken You know what? I mean like that that's the worst Experience or like the worst of it as far as like my hospital experience has gone So I knew that you know, I was doing the hospital birth just for the what-if factor and I knew that there was going to be things that I didn't know was happening or, you know, that I just, I may not understand everything that was being thrown at me or said to me. So I just like the idea of having a monetarist. And so when I was thinking about it and my husband and I were discussing it, we were like, listen, like, my pregnancy has

**PALLAVI SASTRY:** been fairly uneventful, and there's nothing wrong with me. And I'm just sort of bored through my pregnancy, which I know is not everybody's experience. But again, I'm really glad that that was mine. And why am I still going to a what-if sort of scenario when it doesn't feel completely necessary? Why not put it all into our hands and take control of it and, you know, go the home birth route? Because we already have somebody who can provide that for us. And that was Abby.

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** Yeah, your monetarist actually is a midwife. Exactly.

**PALLAVI SASTRY:** Her main gig is catching babies at home.

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** Right. Exactly. It sounds like you kind of switched from a what-if to a just-in-case, meaning not assuming something's going to go wrong and be in the setting that didn't feel most comforting to you, to being in the setting that did feel most comforting to you and having a plan for what would happen just in case.

**PALLAVI SASTRY:** Right. And also what we sort of discussed and what I tried to empower myself with was that the just-in-case stuff is it can be mostly psychological, right? It's like it's fear, elevating stress. It's, you know, all of that stuff that could make someone nervous enough to, like, change their whatever's happening in their body physiologically. So, like, at least that's the way I looked at it. And so if I can be at home where I am comfortable, then all of those factors are already lower of me stressing myself out or, you know, being scared of something.

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** It definitely appears from helping, watching people labor in different settings that things tend to go best when you're in the setting where you feel safest. Obviously, sometimes you can't because other things come up that make you need to be in a setting that you may not want to be in. But to the extent you can, things seem to go the smoothest that way. So that goes both ways. If you're terrified of hospitals and you're laboring beautifully and walk into the hospital, sometimes it just comes to a screeching halt and it needs a lot of intervention because you're in an environment that doesn't feel relaxing or safe to you. And the opposite happens, too. Somebody who's, let's say,

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** pretty sure that they don't like hospitals but also terrified to not be in a hospital, they don't make any progress until they transport to the hospital sometimes. And then right when you get there, it's like the flood gates open and the baby comes running out because really they were looking for the medical safety blanket. Right. So for you, you decided home is your

**PALLAVI SASTRY:** place. Yeah. And I was the former, right? I was somebody that thought I needed the medical safety blanket or that I was sort of not pressured is the wrong word. But, you know, everybody around me was just concerned. And, you know, it's not a home birth is still not a normal choice in 2019. So, you know, it was just more of like, you know, what is it that I want? Am I really? Is the medical safety blanket for me or is it for, you know, family members or, you know, friends or whoever it was that was like, are you sure you want to do that? You know, that does, you know, what if you what if something happens and, you know, don't you want the NICU close by in case something happens to the baby?

**PALLAVI SASTRY:** And I was like, I'd rather not really think about that right now because there's literally nothing wrong with my pregnancy at the moment.

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** So did you have in the back your mind like what if something does come up

**PALLAVI SASTRY:** during my labor? I'm sure it was always there. I just tried really hard not to entertain it because again, like I think I might've talked about this on my before episode. I sort of had a difficulty conceiving because I think I was holding on to a lot of anxiety and stress and things that I hadn't dealt with earlier in my life. And once I was able to look at those things and really discuss it with my therapist and like really, really addressed whatever it was that I was like physically holding on to. That's when I got pregnant. And so I tried to tell myself, okay, well, you know, if I'm not feeding into this anxiety, then hopefully I'm not going to manifest something physiologically that will go wrong.

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** Right. And the other thing is you're, you're not laboring at home with no support. You're laboring at home with a midwife who is primary care provider, who is trained both for

when birth goes amazing and when A, red flags come up or pink flags come up in which case they don't sit at home waiting to see if they're going to become red flags or white flags they transport for safety. And then B, when actual red flags come up and they bring a ton of equipment with them to handle the situation until you can get advanced medical support. So, you know, you had that as part of your plan and then you also did you have a specific backup hospital and doctor.

**PALLAVI SASTRY:** Yeah. So not a specific. doctor, but we did have UCLA Santa Monica as our backup hospital. With midwives. Yes, which I was not really aware until, again, Abby told me about it. And yeah, so when we went to go tour there, I was pretty impressed with what they were sharing with us of what they have and that they were also offering nitrous now as an option outside of epidurals and C-sections and they try to be a little more preventative there. And Abby said also in case you need a root canal during your labor, there you have it.

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** Well, it's more fun, isn't it?

**PALLAVI SASTRY:** Sure. You can have a good time. Why not laugh during labor?

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** Exactly.

**PALLAVI SASTRY:** Yeah.

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** And then they also have an advanced NICU. Your safety net is there. It's just not in your living room.

**PALLAVI SASTRY:** Exactly. Exactly. And one of the reasons why I loved working with Abby is because she was one of her quotables that I like to say is she never transports a train wreck to the hospital. It's never gotten to a red flag situation. She transports because somebody is wanting pain management or somebody is, you know, it never gets to a dire situation. She's not looking for that in order because she wants to make sure that midwifery stays around for a long time and she practices in a way that's very political and safe.

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** Well, she also wants you and your baby to be safe and healthy. And I think it's part of what makes home birth safe is that you have trained people not taking risks. You have people looking for these risk factors and then realizing this is no longer an ideal home birth and transporting while things are calm and healthy and you get to the, because you are now, let's say, a little bit more higher risk, you get to an environment where they can handle what could happen if that risk continues to progress.

**PALLAVI SASTRY:** Right.

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** Well, guess what I want to do?

**PALLAVI SASTRY:** Okay. Tell me.

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** I want to find out all the juicy details because I don't know them. I've seen you a couple of times since you popped your kid out and deliberately haven't talked to you so I can find out here first just with everybody else. So let's do this. Let's take a quick break. We'll come right back and find out how it all went down. Welcome back to the Informed Pregnancy podcast. We're

talking to Paula V. Sastry and we're going to find out the juicy details of your labor and delivery journey. How did it all start?

**PALLAVI SASTRY:** So let's see. I like, I'm sure every other woman looked at the calendar a million times on her due date and was like, okay, this is it. Yeah, it's like, you know, your due date comes up and you're like, okay, it's supposed to happen today. And, you know, I wasn't necessarily sitting there waiting for it to happen, but I was like really hoping that. wasn't going to be super late and from you know 20 weeks onward I would like Abby would remind me that most first-time moms are late and the average is one week and one day late and guess what I was exactly one week and one day late. She should have said two days early. And it's hilarious because leading up to it we got to my 36-week appointment and the baby was

**PALLAVI SASTRY:** already low and kind of locked and loaded like she was almost dropped at 36 weeks because there was a so much extra space on my upper abdomen when she was doing the exam and she was like wow she's already really low like that's a good sign you know maybe maybe you will be you know right on time or early because she's ready to go and then 37 weeks went by she's still low 38 weeks went by she's even lower 39 weeks and then when we got to 40 weeks she came and you know we had an appointment at 40 weeks and three days and I was like okay when do we start getting nervous about having to do hospital birth because you know of course the rules is that in California in California is that you can only deliver with a midwife if you're within 42 weeks.

**PALLAVI SASTRY:** Yeah so we're at 40 weeks and three days and it's my appointment she was like well you know I could wait until actually at 41 weeks to do an exam and I was like well no you're already here let's do an exam now and she started doing the exam and she wasn't even like an inch in and she was like oh hey baby's head oh and so baby was really low it was she was really low and I was already two centimeters dilated but I wasn't in labor yeah so

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** I mean there's a few things here first of all I love that on your due date you looked at the calendar a million times because I feel like most people two weeks before the due date start looking at the calendar a million times and sometimes drive themselves totally crazy because they really will and want and believe the baby's gonna come pre due date and then when it doesn't it just gets very anxiety-provoking. You had till 42 weeks which a lot of people don't have until that because sometimes their providers are not comfortable going that long and encourage them to have the baby sooner and the other thing is that you're using the terms that almost everybody uses in regard to the due date early and late

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** but really the window is like a month-long window so anytime in that window is kind of on target and that due date is sort of like a it's just a guesstimate and so you know cookies are supposed to bake for 20 minutes but on higher altitudes like different ovens you know you want them when when they're done not when 20 minutes go by. I thought they were referred to as buns in the

**PALLAVI SASTRY:** oven not cookies. Oh I'm good with anything in the oven. Right exactly yeah I mean I mean don't get me wrong I was definitely losing patience leading up to it I would say at 38 weeks I was waddling around and ready to get her out but I definitely wasn't again like it I was on high alert for not making myself anxious in any way because I didn't want to do that to myself so if anything

my husband was actually a little more anxious yeah he I think came home on that Friday before the due date and my due date was on a Sunday and he told his office he was like well I may not see you for two weeks bye like you know and then that entire week like rolled by and he was like trying to find excuses to work from home because you know he just

**PALLAVI SASTRY:** really wanted it to be on time so it was such an arbitrary number it really is it really is I mean yeah I think within that week that I that was late like the week that we were late the 41st week that's when it really started to be like okay I can't I can't do this anymore this is really heavy it's hard I couldn't even get through a 10-minute walk without huffing and puffing and and yeah like I said I was already two centimeters dilated I was like why am I not in labor I liked it because I got to hang out

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** with you more there you go everybody came two weeks before the due date I would have been lonely but here's the other thing people always ask hey my baby's really low does that mean it's gonna come early no I'm already starting to soften or dilate a little so maybe my baby's gonna come before the due date no you just don't know until you start having contractions right your water breaks or something like that you know you just don't know how

**PALLAVI SASTRY:** did yours go from there so from that 40 weeks and three days we found out I was two centimeters dilated 80% of faced is what she guessed and after that for the next three days I would say I found as many hippie crunchy granola which things that I could do so I definitely well this not as it's pretty mainstream at this point but I definitely went to acupuncture. I came to see you a couple extra times. And then I hired this lovely lady in Sherman Oaks who does a reflexology massage for induction. And so that was like, it was amazing. And it's like concierge. So she came to my house. I mean, it wasn't cheap, but she came to my house and she like basically did all the drop points and you know, which is at the traps, right?

**PALLAVI SASTRY:** And then there's a few around your ankle. There's one, you know, right by your shin. And it was like an hour long induction reflexology massage. I was smelling the clary sage oil. I was doing all of it. Because I knew that like there was already some movement happening at least. So I was like, okay, what can I do to like just make myself feel proactive about this? And then Sunday, that next Sunday rolled around and that was a week. And you know, Abby came back for the weekly appointment and I was like, can we just do another exam? I just wanna know if something's happened. I just wanna know if I've done anything to move this along. And then I was like about three centimeters and she left that afternoon and then literally three hours later

**PALLAVI SASTRY:** I felt my first contraction. Oh wow. Yeah.

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** Was it strong?

**PALLAVI SASTRY:** You know, I was trying to like get some yoga breathing in. So at first I thought maybe it was just me just doing some really intense breathing and like with my diaphragm and you know, my belly going in and out. And then when the second one happened, it was about a half hour later, I was like, no, I didn't do that. That was my body doing that. And I had flown in my best friend from Atlanta because I really wanted her to like be at my birth. And you know, when that Wednesday after we had done that first initial exam at 40 weeks and three days, I called her, I said, Ashley, it's

time for you to fly in because I really want you to be here. And so she flew in on that Friday. We did all those, you know, the massage and all those things.

**PALLAVI SASTRY:** I was eating dates, you know, I was doing the six dates a day and, you know.

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** Textbook.

**PALLAVI SASTRY:** Exactly. The Sunday rolls around and we were like, oh no, Ashley's flying out on Monday. And you know, nothing's happened yet. And so I was really happy that like labor started.

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** 12 dates.

**PALLAVI SASTRY:** Yeah. I was happy that labor started, you know, shortly after Abby left that day. And then I would say they were a half hour apart for a good five hours. And that's when I had my, you know, quote last meal for a couple of days. I had a nice juicy impossible burger.

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** Ooh, great. It'd be nice if the reflexologist who's coming anyway would just bring the impossible burger.

**PALLAVI SASTRY:** There you go. I'm gonna ask her that next time. It's serious concierge. Yeah, exactly. And so I did that. And then the recommendation from Abby was to go get some sleep because it was the evening. So we knew that, you know, most of my laboring was gonna go overnight and I wasn't gonna get enough sleep or much sleep. So around nine o'clock, I tried to climb into bed. I had, you know, my watch on because it has the app on it that you can track your contractions. Yeah, exactly. I think it's called Full Term.

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** Yeah, that's one of them. There's a whole bunch.

**PALLAVI SASTRY:** Exactly. So I had my watch on and they went from half hour to about 20, 25 minutes. It was really inconsistent at the beginning. So I wasn't really finding a pattern because it went from, you know, the 20, 25 minutes. And then it would be like one, 12 minutes later. And then it went back to 20. It was very, very strange.

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** Yeah, at that point, it's sometimes

**PALLAVI SASTRY:** Yeah.

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** not all that consistent.

**PALLAVI SASTRY:** Exactly. And so around midnight, I would say they were a consistent 15 or so, 15 minutes. And we started to really like, I would cat nap and then like wake up to a contraction. And so around midnight, I got in the shower and tried to relax for a little bit. And then-

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** Was the shower helpful?

**PALLAVI SASTRY:** Oh, I can't say how healing having water is, honestly. That was actually probably the biggest reason I switched to a home birth because I love the bath.

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** The plumbing?

**PALLAVI SASTRY:** Yeah, for plumbing. My own plumbing. Because I wanted to take an hour long shower if I wanted to. And I wanted to sit in the bath for, you know, hours at a time if I wanted to. Yeah. And it just, it's the most relaxing thing ever. I'm a water sign, I'm cancer. So I think that just comes with it. And so around-

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** Sounds nice. I think some of our listeners are gonna ask if they can labor at your house.

**PALLAVI SASTRY:** There you go. I mean, we just have a very basic standup shower, but- Well, it'll work. Welcome, come on over. Yeah, so around two o'clock in the morning, I would say they started becoming about 10 minutes apart. And then we texted my friend Ashley, who was sleeping. And she, you know, walked from the guest house into the main house. And she was like, okay, all right, what do you need? I was like, uh, nothing, I don't know. I was just kind of delirious because they were pretty consistent at that point.

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** Has she been to a birth before?

**PALLAVI SASTRY:** Mm-mm. Oh, first timer. It was the first time. But you know, you choose people that you feel like are gonna make you feel a certain way and what you want that vibe around. know she's she and I've been friends for about 15 years so she just knows what I like and so if I wanted her to make me an electrolyte lemonade then she would go make me an electrolyte lemonade. I thought we were your lemonade hookah. Well you are though. I love that PJ's lemonade. Thank you. But yeah so then around 330 in the morning my husband texted Abby and let her know that it was really progressing and then we called her at four like a half hour later because he started getting nervous that it was like

**PALLAVI SASTRY:** you know I was he was just hearing me you know what I mean I was like you know making the noises in the shower I was on my second or third shower at that point and then I just like moved over to my bed and and the dog was like another doula for me the dog was just you know hanging out with me and just didn't try and get in my face she just laid down and wanted to be with me which was really nice. So sweet. I have patients that lay around

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** deliberately because they want the dogs to be there. Yeah you know I didn't

**PALLAVI SASTRY:** necessarily think about that as like I love my dog and she's she's really amazing she's a very calm presence but I wasn't sure how she was gonna do because she can be a little anxious at times I mean she's a rescue dog so like you never know what you're gonna get but she's very calm and loving but she can't get anxious so I was like well I'm not sure what she's gonna do but she was absolutely amazing during the birth and so she just laid with me and my mom was there my mom was like you know just trying to like hover and do the best that she could so she wouldn't get nervous or scared or anything and then my husband you know called Abby at four in the morning and she was like okay how far apart are they and we said he was

**PALLAVI SASTRY:** like five minutes it's five minutes and she said okay call me when they're three. Oh wow. She does what she's doing right and he was like okay and my mom was like are you sure she's not supposed to be here right now and you have your friend and your dog so yeah exactly so I

was okay it was getting intense and you know I until you do it you don't know what it's gonna feel like and it was a pain and a intensity that I've never felt before but I felt taken care of and I was at home so I just kind of bared down and dealt with it and then around five ish we got to three minutes apart three to four minutes apart you know what that is

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** exciting cliffhanger exactly we should take a little break let's do it don't go anywhere we'll be right back welcome back to the important pregnancy podcast cliffhanger you finally got to the point you wanted which is your midwife

**PALLAVI SASTRY:** is heading over yes and thankfully she only lives ten minutes away from me especially five in the morning oh yeah for sure and she was like when we called her at five in the morning she was like it's okay I'm already on my way I'll be there in ten minutes and she was yeah and she was she was there and she just got to work you know honestly like I was doing my thing laboring and you know looking back on it my husband was saying that she was just kind of walking around making herself at home like setting things up like it was just so it was like a regular day for her right so did the office exactly this is what she does and you know I didn't notice that she was around until I moved over to the tub which was around I would say

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** maybe 637 o'clock is this one of those like inflatable yeah so was your goal

**PALLAVI SASTRY:** to labor and deliver in the tub you know I was gonna play it by year I was happy that there was gonna be a tub for me to sit in and I was always open to the idea but I also knew that my bed was available and like you know I just knew I had options I didn't want to like put my hopes up on anything oh yeah so you got in there yeah I got in there and then I didn't want to leave because it just got too intense I just say I just didn't want to move I was on my knees in the tub and you know because it's a tub I was able to stay on my knees it wasn't like too uncomfortable or anything there's a lot of support there and I was either holding on to my husband shoulders and hands and squeezing him every time something happened for the last couple

**PALLAVI SASTRY:** hours or you know Ashley and him kind of sort of took turns and I I still don't know exactly how long I pushed I didn't push for that long actually and my water didn't break until 15 minutes before her head came oh that's cool yeah and I didn't even realize it didn't dawn on me that my water hadn't broken yet mm-hmm and I was that far into labor does this mean you're out of your cognitive head oh yeah you're just I'm just like along for the ride I'm just going between contractions I'm literally living for the next break is what I was doing I said the next time I have five seconds to breathe that's what I'm looking forward to because it's intense and I didn't even realize, I flipped over at one point and I was sitting, you know, facing up

**PALLAVI SASTRY:** at Abby and Johanna, who's the other midwife, who's awesome. And then I gave one push in that position and my water broke and it really freaked me out because I didn't remember that it had happened. Yeah, and so it just like broke in a big way. It was like somebody took a needle to a water balloon and like it broke. So it really freaked me out.

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** But you're in water.

**PALLAVI SASTRY:** I'm in water. And you still feel that. And I still felt it. It felt like her head hit the opening as it burst. You know what I mean? Like that's what it felt like to me. And that was the one time that I might've felt scared.

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** You had been pushing already by then?

**PALLAVI SASTRY:** I pushed twice, I would say. And then that happened. And then that happened.

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** And then only 15 more minutes until, wow, okay.

**PALLAVI SASTRY:** Yeah, so she was ready to go, but my water just hadn't broken. And so it really freaked me out. That was the one time I would say I was scared. And I like called out for my mom. I was like, mom, what is happening? She was like, you're okay, you're okay. And she was like crying. And I was like, okay, I can't, I can't. Don't cry, I can't do this. If you're sick. And so I just tried to like hunker down. And then that's when Johanna gave me the best advice she could. She was like, okay, every time you feel pain, send the pain downwards and push. Like don't make guttural noises rather than yelling like, ha ha, up here making ha ha down here. And it took, like I said, 15, 20 minutes, and she was out. Yeah, I just knew I wanted it.

**PALLAVI SASTRY:** It was like at that point. I know, I know. And so the most interesting part was that my early labor was what, 12 hours long? But my intense labor, active labor, up until delivery was only four hours long. Four-ish hours long. And that was because I think early labor took a while because her arms were up near her face because she was low for four weeks, right? So her arms were like up near her face and crossed like Wakanda forever. And so she came out that way. And Abby said that she could have sworn, seeing how she came out, that she tore me up. She could have sworn that that's what was gonna happen when she did the after exam. And amazingly. No.

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** Nothing.

**PALLAVI SASTRY:** No.

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** I'm not kidding.

**PALLAVI SASTRY:** I mean, yes.

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** Yes, it was.

**PALLAVI SASTRY:** Yes, but I mean. Amazingly, it was like I had maybe a paper cut from one of her fingernails or something.

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** Really?

**PALLAVI SASTRY:** And that was it. I didn't tear at all.

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** Even that doesn't sound like amazingly pleasant.

**PALLAVI SASTRY:** Oh, sure.

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** But at least it's not a body part being torn open. Wow, good for you. Wow, that's so exciting.

**PALLAVI SASTRY:** Yeah, but during it, I had, I was literally just waiting for the next five second break.

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** I mean, do you remember consciously the moment she came out?

**PALLAVI SASTRY:** I remember the head coming out for sure, but I was on my knees, right? And I was, my back was facing the midwives.

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** She was behind you.

**PALLAVI SASTRY:** Yes.

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** They were behind you.

**PALLAVI SASTRY:** So she also like was behind me. So I do remember lifting up a bit and that's what they told me to do as her body was coming out, lift up a bit so they could get her out. And then as soon as I flipped over, they put her on me and that's when I got real. Because all of a sudden there's a small human on me and I think I said, I haven't watched the video yet, but I think I said something like, oh my God, oh my God, oh my God. And then they said, talk to her, tell her to breathe and all of these things. And I just tried to like talk to her a little bit. I said, come on sheesh. Her name is Meenakshi. And so we call her sheeshie. Sheeshie. And so I was like, come on sheesh and breathe for mama. And my mom and my husband said

**PALLAVI SASTRY:** that like all of a sudden I went back to being Pallavi again, but Pallavi in mom mode. And it was like immediate. And so.

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** Just an instinct.

**PALLAVI SASTRY:** Yeah, that's what it felt like for sure. And they had to help her breathe for the within the first five minutes of her life.

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** Some rescue breathing.

**PALLAVI SASTRY:** Yeah, a little bit of resuscitation. It wasn't anything super serious, but what was amazing about that is I'm not sounding terrified right now because they didn't make me terrified. You know, the midwives in the moment, they said, okay, we're just gonna help her breathe a little bit and get some of the gunk out of her lungs. And I was like, okay. They were like, just keep talking to her. Keep holding her close. And you know, within 60s to 90 seconds, I would say she was breathing and crying. So they never built it up to a situation where I had to be terrified of anything, which is hats off to them.

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** I think that's where they come in with all that equipment for suction and for the bag to give them breath.

**PALLAVI SASTRY:** Right. You know, they're prepared for that.

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** Exactly.

**PALLAVI SASTRY:** Wow.

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** What a story.

**PALLAVI SASTRY:** It was intense, man. It was good. It was movie worthy.

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** You're happy then with your decision to switch to home birth.

**PALLAVI SASTRY:** Absolutely. As far as the birthing process goes, I would not change a thing about it. But? No, well the but I think is, you know, who really is ready

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** for a newborn, right? Oh, what happens once the baby comes. Exactly. Oh, so how

**PALLAVI SASTRY:** was that for you? Sounds like not as amazing as you might have thought. You know, I was happy. I was so, like, on a high that we had done what we just did, which was birth at home, and she was here, and all of that stuff. But I think I'm still struggling with how my identity has changed, if I'm being quite honest. You know, I think it's okay. So I watched a TED talk recently. I don't remember the woman's name, but it was a TED talk that and she talked about how she had no idea how to calm her baby. And she thought she was a bad mother. And, you know, she was 32 years old when she had her first kid, and she was a career woman. And she thought, oh, I can, you know, I'm good at solving problems and this and that. You know, I can be a mom. This

**PALLAVI SASTRY:** will be great. And I thought she was talking about me, you know, because I'm 33, and I'm having my first kid. I'm a career woman, and I am not to sound cocky. This is her words in the TED talk. She said, I'm used to doing things well. And so when something like giving birth happens and this newborn is completely dependent on you, literally, you have to keep this thing alive with your body. And there are no rules to the chaos. I felt really defeated within the first two weeks.

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** It was kind of interesting because for the nine months that led up to it, you kept that thing alive with your body. Right. But it was on autopilot. Right. Now you have to kind of do it consciously and react to what the baby's doing on your own. All the feeding that was happening, all the eliminating that was happening, it's not on autopilot anymore. And they cry. Right. Well, they have opinions, right? They have opinions about what's being done to them, what they want, when they want it. But also the only language they really communicate with is crying verbally, I mean, body language and eye language and stuff. But it's hard to learn what all those things mean.

**PALLAVI SASTRY:** Right. And every time she cries, I swear it sounds like traffic to me and I'm from New York. I just felt like the windows were open. There was sirens going by. And then, you know, breastfeeding wasn't instinctual, which was what I was told was going to be my experience with breastfeeding because, you know, oh, you're a healthy woman and your milk supply is going to be fine. And, you know, it'll feel like, you know, very instinctual. You'll enjoy it. It'll be a great bonding experience. And I don't think that's the case for me. And I feel a little guilty saying that. But I think if more women were up front about how hard it is.

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** I love your realness. I mean, to be honest, it looks pretty simple for some people. Both of those things. Sometimes the actual mother instinct just looks like she's been doing it for years. And breastfeeding, you literally sometimes see the baby just crawl and feed and she never has a problem. And sometimes people struggle with both of those things hard, I think more often than

it's talked about. So I'm glad you're talking about it. And it's true all throughout pregnancy. Some people have an awful first trimester and some people have a great first trimester. Some people have an awful third trimester, you know, all along the way. There are parts that are going to come more naturally or

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** easily to somebody and other people are going to struggle with it. It doesn't make you a better or worse person or a better or worse mother when you have those feelings bubble up. And we bring so much with us into our parenting journey, mother, moms and partners, dads too. So yeah, were you able to find help for sorting through those feelings and also with feeding?

**PALLAVI SASTRY:** So my husband is amazing. We have a really great relationship, mostly because we don't have any filters with communication. We like to say that we're over communicators.

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** I'm so jealous.

**PALLAVI SASTRY:** No, your wife is great. What are you talking about?

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** No, my wife is amazing. It's me. That's not great. I

**PALLAVI SASTRY:** got it.

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** Not because she doesn't make it easy. I just struggle with sometimes saying, you know, I don't really like this rice, you know. I can't get out simple, basic things.

**PALLAVI SASTRY:** So on day three of her life, I basically had a meltdown because like, you know, you go to the pediatrician for the first time and everybody knows that the baby is going to lose weight within the first week that they're born because A, they're, you know, pooping for the first like three days, like whatever's they've been building up inside their bodies inside the womb. So they're literally like dropping a pound, not a pound, but like, you know,

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** Well, a significant portion of their small body weight.

**PALLAVI SASTRY:** Exactly, in poop. So that happens, which to me makes it feel like the birth weight is a moot because like So much of it comes out in poop within the first two days And then the milk supply is anybody's guess everybody says averages three to five days And you don't really know when yours is gonna come in. So you're sitting there Exactly, so you're sitting there like hoping that you're keeping this little thing alive And you're not doing great with the latch and so on the third day I had a complete meltdown and I said we have to call somebody because I Was under the impression that a lactation consultant was for people who were for lack of a better word already having challenges whether their pregnancy was difficult or I

**PALLAVI SASTRY:** Just thought that a lactation consultant was for when you were in dire need and something was going wrong and I just didn't have someone in my back pocket. So we literally went online. We went to Yelp and We tried to find somebody who was close by who had great reviews and We found Sarah Seybold. Oh, yeah, she's amazing. She swooped in on day four. She I filled out her little message forum on her website She got back to me the next morning I filled out her consent form and she came over that afternoon and she swooped in and literally changed our life Emma lactation.

Yes, Emma lactation. She changed our life in a couple of hours. Yeah, she's a very special person

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** Yeah, well good. We talked about on the podcast frequently how you Used to live on your family property in the village and be surrounded by pregnancy birth postpartum breastfeeding and surrounded by villagers Who liked you and wanted to help you and support you and make sure you thrived and succeeded? We kind of moved away from our family. So we don't really have that kind of support many of us most of us anymore So that's been replaced with like professionals who are lactation people or doulas or nannies or night nurses Even car season stores are people who just come around you to be your village, you know And some of them are just online communities where you can get support all the time and for free even right? So it's important

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** I think what you said is so powerful that it just doesn't oftentimes come naturally and it's not for when your boob is Exploding it's not the only time to call right for help And the other thing is, you know, I'll throw a plug to my wife who has the afterbirth plan That's her program where she helps prepare individuals and their partners For what's gonna happen after the baby comes emotionally and hormonally and how the dynamics of the relationship Changed and what some of the struggles that people go through During that transition it's sort of like trying to stand up on water skis years So you're sitting in the water before the boat starts. You're fine, right?

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** Once you're up on ski, so you're fine, but there's this very unstable in between where you're trying to get it you know, just right and Planning for that ahead of time is can be really helpful, right?

**PALLAVI SASTRY:** Yeah, and I just didn't because and not to most people don't by the way, you know, that's good to hear. Yeah Yeah, I just I mean not to blame any one person or anything. It's just you know, I think also culturally like we are not really taught to Express distress with things like family and our children and you know Like this is all supposed to be things that are instinctual because again There are still you know many communities and cultures within India that are very much the village mindset like they they do still sort of live that way in many parts of India, so like whatever my parents and my grandparents experience was is

**PALLAVI SASTRY:** Completely different from what I was gonna go through and I don't know why I didn't consider those differences now, you know, I

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** And you're helping other people know right hopefully before they get there

**PALLAVI SASTRY:** Yeah, you know, I am one of the first of my friends to get pregnant So I'm definitely on speed dial for a lot of people right now

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** Well, congratulations. Thank you. And thank you for coming twice wants to share all the buildup and wants to share your beautiful Story, of course and also for keeping it real and just sharing where the struggles have been for you and how you overcame them

**PALLAVI SASTRY:** Thank you. I am gonna go into my car in just a minute and listen to your podcast You want to plug it? Yeah, we have a podcast called we meeting my best friend And I we have a podcast called what our friends for we we discuss many facets of friendship and we address how it's

become More and more difficult for us to build the village And and what we can do to open up communication and make that easier

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** So you were helping people with that before you even knew how powerful helping people with that really is that's true That's true at home. Thanks for listening to our podcast If you have a second go into your app and rate us and give us feedback Just on its feedback. We like to hear from you And if you have a topic idea send it to us that is where most of our current topics are coming coming from, just visit info at informpregnancy.com.


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