Gillian Shure: Before Birth

Episode 166 · March 12, 2020 · with Gillian Shure

IN THIS EPISODE

Actress, comedian, and writer Gillian Shure joins Dr. Elliot Berlin, DC at 37–38 weeks pregnant with her first baby for the before-birth half of a two-part series. She traces her path from Ann Arbor and hippie parents through Wisconsin, USC theater school, and a very recent start in stand-up, then tells how she met her husband while waitressing — and how their road to pregnancy ran through freezing her eggs four months into the relationship, a frustrating first fertility office, six months of trying, and IVF with Dr. Wendy Chang. With doula Nina Phelan and a Cedars-Sinai birth ahead, she shares the unmedicated birth she is hoping for, why she prefers "surge" to "contraction," and how much room she is leaving for the plan to change.

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DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Welcome to the informed pregnancy and parenting podcast. I'm your host dr. Elliott Berlin today We're joined by an actress comedian writer genuine tell it like it is big-hearted Incubator growing her very first baby and ready to pop anytime now This is the before episode before she has the baby and it's going to be I'm sure an exciting two-part series Gillian sure welcome to the podcast. Thank you so much for having me I like that word incubator. You're an incubator called an incubator. No It's it's a positive term part of your job description. It feels very accurate. I love hanging out with you You're so interesting and refreshingly real. Thank you

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And so I want to find out more about you and where you came from and what you do is also interesting to me Okay, and more about this pregnancy and your plans for birth. So let's jump right in where you're from

GILLIAN SHURE: I'm from Ann Arbor, Michigan. So where the University of Michigan is Like a big 10 college town like very liberal 45 minutes outside of Detroit doesn't seem anything like you I'm not a product of my Parents were like big hippies the whole thing. Yeah. Yeah, make sense. Mm-hmm. So is it like a party town? No Well, it's like a bunch of liberal educated hippies. So it's kind of like Berkeley, but maybe less patchouli Yeah, I'm gonna have to go check this out for myself. It is it's a

beautiful town It's not a bad place to grow up because it's big enough where you feel like you're it's not like you travel and you'll feel Like oh, I'm from a small town. I've never seen the big city before but it's also small enough where it's very safe

GILLIAN SHURE: And you can pretty much go anywhere and be anywhere. I feel like it's too late for me to grow up there

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Probably but but you could just move all your kids there except everyone in LA would have a heart attack

GILLIAN SHURE: Laughs like it would not go well, when did you leave Ann Arbor? I was ready to get out as much as I did enjoy growing up there So, you know, I did the smart thing of like rebelling against my parents by not applying to good schools So I ended up at Wisconsin, which actually is a very good school and was at the time It just in hindsight I would say that probably the best kind of school for me would have been a small liberal arts school and I ended Up at these huge schools in Madison I went to Madison for a year and then I transferred because I wanted to act but it was like my secret So I didn't tell anyone so really Go back. When did you know you wanted to act from when I was young?

GILLIAN SHURE: I mean I did it when I was younger and then I did sports in high school

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: You did acting like in young people's theater. Yeah great school. Yeah

GILLIAN SHURE: Wow, and you liked it. Yeah, I loved it, but you didn't tell people you liked it. No

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And then which sport volleyball and softball, oh wow, yeah the tall people sports I was just thinking that just me and then you're a tall incubator people can't see you but you're a tall incubator

GILLIAN SHURE: I know no one's ever told me I look small before cuz I'm 5'10 and I'm sturdy Yeah, and people keep telling me I look small right now really for being 37 38 weeks But it's just your belly. Yeah, my belly looks. Yeah. Nobody's ever told me my belly looks No one's ever told me that it's a really unique comment But I think it's cuz I'm all torso and I'm so tall so she just has a lot of room She has room in the womb room in the womb. I'm looking forward to it

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I've been juicing for a little bit now. So like every day. That's it. You're that's all you're having. Yeah How is that I like it it's yeah, I wouldn't do it forever, but I mean for a little while It's nice to cleanse the system. I know it's how long are you doing it for I don't know right now It feels great. So I'm just doing it. You don't even think about it. No, I don't cheat Wow, I like it impressive. Yeah, so maybe someday like somebody who hasn't seen me in a while be like wow Your belly's so small and then I'll know how you feel. Yeah, I think it's it's funny If your belly's small now, what's gonna happen when you push it out? I mean one can only help

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: All right, so you don't tell people you like acting you get into tall people sports and then you go to college

GILLIAN SHURE: Wanting to major in drama. Yeah at University of Wisconsin, which is a weird place to be for that and I was in a class where they had us either be a piece of paper towel a Kleenex

Tin foil or saran wrap. Well, I was like wow all recyclable

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Is it all

GILLIAN SHURE: No, I mean if it's clean enough probably if you're like a better person me

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Recycle saran wrap but nice only if it's clean. You can't you gotta clean you gotta wash it and then recycle

GILLIAN SHURE: I do reuse plastic bags much to my husband's chagrin has a choice anymore. I know it's true. Yeah, so I transferred I mean after that class I knew that I was in a ridiculous place

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: So I had to transfer so my kids freaked out because I brought home recycled toilet paper Oh god, and they're like, oh my god, that's so gross. I'm like why and they're like, well who used it the first time?

GILLIAN SHURE: I'm like, that's not what it means. It's a valid question. Good call Sorry, I cut you off. No, it's okay. So I just got bored. I mean I didn't get bored I just knew it was the wrong place. I knew I wasn't gonna stay at Wisconsin It was a great school also for anyone who wants their kids to go there It's actually a great school because it's fun, but it's everyone studies and it was wonderful when they're not ice fishing When they're not ice-fishing, yeah I mean and then as soon as it gets to be about 45 degrees out it's summer so everyone comes out and

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: T-shirts, you know, I lived in Nebraska for a year when I got there. They said you're from New York I said yes, and they said oh you're gonna be disappointed because you're used to having four seasons I said how many seasons do you have in Nebraska? And they said oh, we only have two I said, what are they and they said we have winter and the fourth of July Yep, that was pretty accurate It's cold for a long part of the year. That's tough. Yeah, where'd you go?

GILLIAN SHURE: So I was gonna go to New York or LA. I was just like, where do they make? Entertainment entertainment and then I should have gone to New York another poor decision and I ended up in Los Angeles Because I was like movies and UCLA didn't accept sophomore transfers. So I ended up at USC Oh really? I wasn't the most thought-out Individual. Wow. So I went to theater school at USC. Oh not on the rowing team No, well, maybe I just said that to get that's maybe you're not even into theater

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah, you just said it because you wanted to get onto the rowing team, correct? clever So you studied theater at USC I did yeah and all genres like is it

GILLIAN SHURE: Yeah, you if you wanted to get into the MFA program You would have had to start over and add in another year. So I just did the BA I mean you read a lot of plays. It's okay. I don't know Wisconsin was a better school But you get to act you get to act Wisconsin was a better school for theater No in general. So USC freaked me out. It was a big culture shock I mean I came from very granola place where like There was no upkeep for women He was just fleeces and Birkenstocks and then USC was like there were girls with fake boobs and makeup And it was a lot. It was very it was a culture shock. I will say well you seem to have survived Well, I had a girlfriend from Miami that literally dragged me. Oh, she was like you're like

GILLIAN SHURE: Yes transition doula. Yes What was the guy from my fair lady? Oh my Henry Eagans. Oh Henry Eagans, yeah But you got to act I did get to act and then I also Overlapped my senior year with them a Meisner program, which really was it's not the best for acting at USC I didn't think but I always found my own way to do that So your Meisner method you're a little I didn't a little of everything but it was a life-changing thing at the time I had An incredible teacher and it was a great awesome school. Yeah, when did comedy happen? Comedy sort of was I was doing comedy in all my acting a lot of times But I didn't start to do stand-up until really recently really. Yeah, really just about a year

GILLIAN SHURE: It came about because I wasn't working that much and it's a way to write and perform on your own It's a way to take some power back into a very powerless situation. I feel like hmm I mean, what's it like the first time you go do stand-up because it's different than scripted I mean, well ironically the first time I did it. I took a class because I thought oh, I Stand up Yeah. To write and perform? Yeah. Because I thought that was a good way into it and they put you on a show. But I really took it because I wanted to learn the structure of a joke because I write.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Was it Flappers?

GILLIAN SHURE: No. No. This one was at The Improv.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Okay.

GILLIAN SHURE: Well, no. It was a woman named Leslie teaches it and I'm blanking on her last name. But anyway, so the final show is at The Improv. So I wanted to learn the structure of a joke for writing and it turns out she doesn't teach anything like that. She just teaches you to tell the truth initially. And it was terrifying and horrifying because I really was looking for something else. But it was actually the perfect way to do it because I think if I had learned something more structured in the beginning, that it would have been detrimental because this way I had such a positive experience the first time I did stand up. And I mean, I expected no one to laugh and it went really well. And so I was like, oh, interesting.

GILLIAN SHURE: And that was just from no structure whatsoever. Telling the truth. Right. And then I studied with a guy named Gary Katzman who's like Jerry Katzman who's the greatest and he's so good. And I learned more about the structure of things. But because I'd had that initial experience first, it went the right order.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: You had both.

GILLIAN SHURE: Yeah. Yeah. So I mean, that's how I did it.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: We're going to do a show together.

GILLIAN SHURE: Yes. But that's how I did it.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I first tell jokes because I'm face blind and I can't tell people apart so I'm always feeling awkward. And then I didn't even realize it as a kid. I just started trying to make people laugh, laugh, laugh. So because I can tell laughs apart and then you can tell laughs apart. Yeah. That's why I make goofy jokes all the time. Oh, my God. So like when someone comes up to me and

trade or Joe, this, you know, happened recently. I get a big, uncomfortably long hug from somebody who I don't even know that I've met before. And I'm like, you know, looking for clues and like sniffing for what she smells like and try to look at her hair. And then I just have to make a joke. And then I'm like, oh, my God. When she laughs, I'm like, I was her doula.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, my God. That's so funny. We had a great, incredible birth, powerful. But I met her for the first time in her 30 weeks pregnant. And she gained more than the average amount of weight. She gained like 60 pounds in her pregnancy. So now seeing her almost a year later, I had nothing to go by. I didn't have stature. I didn't have, I had nothing. She even changed her hair. I had literally nothing. That's amazing. And it wasn't, you know, it all made sense once I figured out who she was. But that's why I make jokes, because it helps me in the moment. I just crack a joke and hope she laughs and then I can narrow down who she is. So I've been telling jokes my whole life, which is why community organizations are like,

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: hey, can you host, you know, MC, are things a little dry, you know? So I started MCing things. And as an MC, it's a really nice transition because, you know, your job is to keep the night running smoothly, not to make jokes. And if you add a few good punch lines in there, they're just so happy that you did, you ran the night smoothly and made them laugh a little bit. They're grateful and they go nuts for you. But if you're doing stand-up comedy and you have three jokes in 10 minutes, you're bombing, you know? So I had like a couple of years of intro. And then when I put together our comedy show, I was still just the host in a comedy club, so I had to be a little more punchy about it. But then I took a class, I've only taken one class.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: It was really one, two hour class, and he was all about the anatomy, the science of creating and delivering jokes, the anatomy of a joke and a punch line and different types of setups and how to take your material and tell the truth, but to find the funny in there. And I was blown away that there's a science to stand-up comedy.

GILLIAN SHURE: Yeah. It's pretty cool.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And then you can make it your own, but it's nice to know the rules, or it's nice to understand it more.

GILLIAN SHURE: Yeah, the mechanics of how it works have a background. I can't wait to do a show with you.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah, it'll be so fun. I know. It's unfortunate that you're having a great pregnancy because, you know, it's less to make fun of.

GILLIAN SHURE: Oh, there's still plenty to make fun of.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Great. All right. I want to find out more about this pregnancy when we come right back. Don't go anywhere. We're going to be right back with Gillian, sure. Welcome back to the Informed Pregnancy podcast. We're talking to incubator, Gillian, sure. Let's talk about this pregnancy thing. So first of all, where did you meet your partner?

GILLIAN SHURE: It's such a horrible story. I wish we had met somewhere romantic, like online, but I was working at a restaurant called Chibo, and he came in. This is like so- To eat? Yes, he came in to eat. So he had been coming in, weirdly. I'd been coming in for 10 years in the morning to write, and he had been coming in for 10 years in the evening because he'd be on his way home from work. And I only worked there for like three months. I think I worked there to meet him.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, wow.

GILLIAN SHURE: I'm not kidding. Universe. It was. And he came in one day, and it was dead. And I just talked to him for like three hours. And it was weird because I had intentionally not been dating because I was making other bad choices for like six months. And so when he came in, I wasn't weird and nervous like I normally am when I meet new people. And so I think that helped because I was just like myself. I wasn't like trying to be cool or flirt.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: If I'm like anybody in the audience, I'm definitely wondering about your other bad choices.

GILLIAN SHURE: Oh, that is like a whole other podcast you need. Three episodes.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Like a Joe Rogan-like podcast. Oh, wow. All right. We'll let that go mysteriously.

GILLIAN SHURE: And so he left, and he didn't get my number. And also, I'd cocked up on him. After three hours. After three hours, he left. And I was like, I work Thursday, Friday. And then he didn't come back the next week. He came back like two weeks later. And then it was really busy at the bar. And I was so mortified that he was going to ask for my number in front of all the regulars and like in front of everyone. I was like, I wanted to spare him that. So I wrote my phone number down. And he says that he had already written his phone number down to give to me. He says that.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Universe.

GILLIAN SHURE: He says. And he's very honest.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: OK, you're like fake news.

GILLIAN SHURE: I don't believe it. No, I do, because he doesn't lie. But I did give it to him first. And I've never given my phone number to anyone where I worked.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Wow. You were bartending.

GILLIAN SHURE: Yeah, waitressing. It was at the bar, yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Waitressing at the bar. Well, they have like a big bar where people can eat dinner and stuff. You don't want to talk about the bad choices at all?

GILLIAN SHURE: Really, it would have to be a separate podcast.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: All right, we'll have you back. Welcome to the podcast. We're the bad choices episode.

GILLIAN SHURE: That's right.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I can feel a whole one.

GILLIAN SHURE: I mean, I just thought Madison and USC were the bad choices. Those were like bad choices light. These were like monumental.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, heavy bad choices. Yeah, we're definitely doing an extra podcast. So then you guys got together. And you stopped working at the restaurant.

GILLIAN SHURE: I will say to all the women out there, I would always think that you'd have to go get progressively better relationships before you get a great one, you know? Like it was like a stepping stone, but it's not true.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: How so?

GILLIAN SHURE: I went bad relationship, bad, okay, pretty good, not great. And then it was like this one. He's amazing.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh wow, it's like the stock market.

GILLIAN SHURE: Yeah, so it doesn't have to be a linear progression from better to great, or from bad to great. It can be like up, down, up, down, perfect. Up, down, up, down, amazing. I have a unicorn. Yeah, I'm very, very lucky.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Wow, that's so nice. I think you deserve it. I think you're, I really, your energy is amazing. And I don't care what choices you made. All I know is the you now. I only met you a year ago, but I think the universe was right in its choice to give you amazing.

GILLIAN SHURE: Thank you.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And also to give him amazing.

GILLIAN SHURE: He says that, so.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I agree.

GILLIAN SHURE: Yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: So then how long before you made it official?

GILLIAN SHURE: Well, we pretty much were together right away. I mean, we froze my eggs like four months into our relationship. You froze your eggs four months in? Yeah. Because I was 35 at the time and I said, hey, I'm going to do this. And he said, yes, absolutely. We should do this.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Well, he doesn't really have to do anything.

GILLIAN SHURE: Well, he contributed to it. I mean, he was definitely a part of it. He was my partner in it as much as anything else.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I hear you.

GILLIAN SHURE: No, we didn't do embryos. Right. We didn't do anything. Just eggs. Yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I accidentally froze eggs one time. My wife was really upset.

GILLIAN SHURE: You were trying to make them hard.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: No, I just put them in the freezer. It's a long story, but we got a new fridge and freezer in there. Each one is a separate unit. This is the fridge and that's the freezer. And I just assumed the one on that side would be the fridge and that one would be the freezer. So we got a delivery from Instacart, not a sponsor as far as I know, and put the eggs in the wrong one. So I froze eggs and she was upset. But you froze eggs and he was happy.

GILLIAN SHURE: And he was happy, yeah. So look at that. But ultimately, we didn't stay with that doctor. I won't say the name of the doctor, but I will say that one thing to look for if you have to choose I would say one of the most important things isn't just the skill of the doctor, which is obviously important, but it's the competency of the office that they work in. Because there's so much unknown and there's so much insecurity and fear and taking all these hormones. And I would go into that office and they'd say, what are you doing today? And I would say, you should be telling me that I don't know what I'm doing. I've never done this before.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: That's weird.

GILLIAN SHURE: It was very frustrating.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I mean, literally, like going in for surgery. And just before they knock you out, what were we going to do again?

GILLIAN SHURE: 100%. So we felt very uncomfortable there. And they got nine eggs and they're frozen there still. So maybe if we need them for a second or whatever. But the office that we ended up with with Dr. Chang is amazing. And the office was so responsive and so good that it really was a night and day experience.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: So when you decide you're ready to have a kid, what's the process?

GILLIAN SHURE: Well, we tried for like six months. And now by this time, I'm 39. You tried without the frozen eggs? Yeah. We just kind of want to just do it.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Like when you say, how trying was you trying? Were you like looking at your ovulation?

GILLIAN SHURE: We were. And for us, it was just horrible. It makes sex and everything that is wonderful and beautiful about sex, it felt like it took that away from us. Trying to make it on a schedule and make it an obligation. And I didn't feel good. He didn't feel good. And I know some people are really good at this. They've made it this wonderful, magical experience. But at that time.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: A Google Calendar reminder?

GILLIAN SHURE: Yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: That's so hot.

GILLIAN SHURE: Or they're good, or they're younger, they have more time. But my husband works a lot. So it was just very hard. People don't really talk about that. Because everyone just goes, oh, just you get to have sex all the time. But it's not like that. I love having sex with my husband. It's not love making.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: It's not love making.

GILLIAN SHURE: It's more mechanical. Yeah, it's got this weird obligatory timing to it. And also, because of the timing of my age, we could try for a year, a year and a half. Then I'll be 40. And then we'll just be getting started. And also, I find the hardest part of trying to get pregnancy and that sort of journey, for me, is the limbo of it. The waiting and the direction of your life, especially for me, because I wasn't. I think if you have a really successful career, it's different. Because you're on this path, and you're working it. And then you're going to have to find a way around it when you're actually deeper into pregnancy and with a newborn. But you'll be able to get back into it more quickly. But for me, I didn't have that set of a career.

GILLIAN SHURE: And it felt difficult to begin something with my full force behind it, because I knew of what was coming up, hopefully. But then you're waiting, and you're waiting. It's a tough time. It's very tough. And you're changing your diet, and you're not. I found the limbo really difficult. And then we found an amazing doctor, Dr. Wendy Chang. And we felt really comfortable with her. It was a night and day experience. And we just wanted to get it over with. Well, get it over with sounds bad, but get it started.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah, that's right.

GILLIAN SHURE: And also, I will say even the choice to have kids was weird, because neither of us had been sure. Neither of us had thought we'd get married and we love being married. And neither of us really thought about having kids so definitively. Like, I wasn't that woman that was imagining what my kids' names are gonna be, or what it was gonna be like to be a mother ever, ever, not once. So really you start to make these decisions based on sort of a fear of regret almost like when I'm older, am I going to want to have kids around me? To take care of me? No, to like to hang out with at Thanksgiving and you know when we're 60 or like. Oh it does make the holidays different. Yeah, you have to start thinking like am I going to regret not having them

GILLIAN SHURE: versus do I really want them because we're happy together and we just got to spend all this time together and ultimately we decided we would. And we're so happy about it now but.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh so after six months of trying you moved your eggs to a different doctor?

GILLIAN SHURE: No she doesn't even accept.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh you had to start from scratch?

GILLIAN SHURE: We had to start from scratch.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh wow.

GILLIAN SHURE: Which was better anyway for us because we wanted to do embryos this time.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh yeah okay.

GILLIAN SHURE: We didn't want to do icksy.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Intracis Plasmic Sperm Injection?

GILLIAN SHURE: Yeah I couldn't even.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Go me. Nice job. This is where you take an egg and a sperm and you literally inject the sperm into the egg and say you're a pair.

GILLIAN SHURE: So our goal for IVF was to make it as close to natural selection as possible. Okay. And so for us that meant when we got the eggs in the sperm even though we didn't have that many eggs instead of doing icksy which is the thing you just explained which I couldn't you get more of them because they take a sperm and individually inject it and has a slightly higher chance of bad things like slightly. But we also liked the idea of just putting all the sperm together and seeing which one.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Letting them all swim together and see who pairs up.

GILLIAN SHURE: Who gives each other their phone number on a napkin.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: That's right.

GILLIAN SHURE: So we did it the first round and we got one and it was a girl and we'd always wanted a boy first and then she said you know if you want a second child you should probably do a second round now because you won't want to do a second round of retrievals after you have a baby and we thought that was a good idea so we did and so then we have three embryos from that one.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Four total.

GILLIAN SHURE: Yep.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Including a girl.

GILLIAN SHURE: Including a boy but then we also feel like she got there first so she gets to come first regardless and then a week before we were doing the transfer so when they were going to put her in they said oh we don't think you should use this embryo because it's an unconfirmed fertilization. Now I guess eggs and this is kind of awesome can fertilize themselves they're not embryos they're not really viable but it looks like they are and so then it was a very difficult decision because we were very attached to this embryo I know that sounds crazy but you do get attached to it and we felt like she had survived and she had been the first one and she made it out of this pool and then they were telling us that it's not safe

GILLIAN SHURE: and for me it was daunting because while I did pretty well with the shots and it is a lot of hormones and I can take it I can like you know deal with stuff but the progesterone shots are intense the needles are very long. It's a big needle and it's a thick oily. It's a thick oily thing so the idea

of going through this whole process and not and not even having something be viable because they just don't know was really frustrating.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Well now we want to know what happened but it's a perfect cliffhanger to take a break. Don't go anywhere we're going to be right back. Welcome back to the informed pregnancy podcast we're talking to Gillian Schur and cliffhanger so you make all these eggs you take these eggs you freeze them but you don't love the process in that office because they don't know what you're there for and then you try naturally for six months and get frustrated with that process and find another doctor who you like a lot. One round of IVF with no forcing the egg and the sperm together leads to one embryo one girl embryo and then a second round three more embryos and you were going to

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: use the girl but not use the girl but then use the girl what happened in the end.

GILLIAN SHURE: There's an amazing recap first of all just want to give you some kudos there and my husband was way more confident about this embryo but he also doesn't have to do the shots so I was right no I did them on oh you did it to yourself I did the progesterone everything in your bum yeah oh my god you're a beast yeah so there was a moment when I was like I don't feel like you are appreciating the extent of how because I am tough and so I think he almost took for granted that tough he didn't really but that's how I felt and I sort of just needed him to understand how really challenging and you're on hormones for a long time so just think then like for this whole time for six months you're on hormones

GILLIAN SHURE: your body's already gained weight so that it was very daunting but I ultimately felt like I was too attached to her and that I would always wonder about this baby and we were so lucky it was a perfect embryo I've had a very easy pregnancy and that's who will get to meet in a couple weeks. What's made it easy? Well I just didn't have a majority of the symptoms that people talk about I didn't get any nausea really I didn't have constipation I didn't have really crazy mood swings I mean only recently in the past week or two just because I think it's towards the end I've had trouble sleeping and normal like some pregnancy aids and the swelling yes is genuinely appalling. They can't see this at home but your finger came out like

GILLIAN SHURE: the swelling. Because it happens like in a day I'm like oh this is fine I'm totally normal and then you look down and it's for real cankles I mean absolutely no ankle left calf to ankle it is gone. There's no room for the fluid anymore. You have so much fluid. It's insane. How many weeks are you now? I'm gonna be 38 on Monday so 37. Holy cow you're in the zone. I'm in the zone. Like 37 is like

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: early term already. Yeah and I'm only freaking out like a lot. You are

GILLIAN SHURE: freaking out? Well let's talk about the birth what did you have in mind? Well we're having an amazing doula Nina Phelan. How do you pronounce her last name?

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: We have a whole episode with Nina. She's amazing. It is like Miss USA home birth and she was the doula and I was there doing bodywork and it was such a cool birth even to just be a fly on the wall even if I had no role there would have been amazing and they came and

talked about it and you know

GILLIAN SHURE: former Miss Canada. She is stunning she really is inside and out though and she makes you feel so comfortable and she really involves my husband which has been incredible really shown him what to do and make him feel you know involved in it. So hopefully you know it's gonna be really easy just like two pumps out painless. Okay I'm writing this down. Oh I don't have to we're recording. Okay so in a hospital. We're doing it at Cedars and she really helps you make it with Dr. Finke. Oh great you have like a great team around you. I think so yeah they've been great so far and she really has shown us how to make it as less hospital like as possible even with lighting and bringing in battery candles and do you have a hospital thing like

GILLIAN SHURE: an aversion to hospitals or like I said I had never considered pregnancy before so I never really I was always really bored when people started talking about births and now I'm like tell me about your episiotomy. So you just realize what and I don't mean to sound alarmist but it is like the patriarchy in a terrible way but the way you learn about it is or what I've understood is that you know we're mammals and mammals like to give birth in private safe places and nothing about a hospital feels like that on its own. It's bright. People are coming in out of the town. I mean think about what they used to do to women. They used to strap them down in bright lights like they just. No partners are allowed with you. Like it's changed a lot.

GILLIAN SHURE: It's changed a lot and we're in a very liberal town and we're in a very progressive hospital but still you have to be very clear about your birth plan. You have to be very clear but what you don't. But just like on that like what you

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: were saying before is on an animalistic level if you were just like out and about looking listening to the little inner voice where should I give birth it would be pretty much everything that is not hospital. Exactly so that's what you're trying to create a little bubble around you within the hospital so you have that medical safety blanket but you also have your own little environment that feels more like what you're what animalistic insides are looking for. Correct. I'm trying to mitigate the fluorescence of it. Oh that's a perfect way to put it. Brilliant. Yeah. Yeah and then so you would like to give birth vaginally I take that. I mean I'm going for the natural vag birth. Natural vag. So natural is a funny term. Does it mean

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: unmedicated? Unmedicated. Okay. That's the road that you're steering towards. Okay. Yeah. Are you like not that many people do that percentage wise. So

GILLIAN SHURE: what's your motivation for it. Well I'm confident that nature will take over and I will love this baby enough but I don't want to interfere in any of the hormones that lead to bonding and Pitocin can do that and those drugs can interfere with the bonding from what I've learned. I just want to be as present and open to the natural human bonding as possible. Do you think you're half jokingly so I think it'll just be like two pushes and the baby will be out but is that part joke or is that. No I'm not naive I know it's gonna be whatever it is and listen however anyone births their baby that comes out with a healthy baby God bless them that's the right way that that baby needs to come out. I have no judgments or anything I'm

GILLIAN SHURE: just telling you what I'm going for. No no yeah but I'm trying to

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: figure out in your

GILLIAN SHURE: mind when you think about it, what do you realistically think the process might be like? I think it's going to be long, and I don't know how long it's going to be. I don't know. I've never given birth before. Who knows? I mean, I've watched birth videos. You've done a little homework, yeah. I've done my homework. We did the Hypno birthing class, so you watch a lot of videos.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: How are you with intensity, different kinds of intensity?

GILLIAN SHURE: I think you can do anything for a minute, and I think a lot of it's breathing, and a lot of the semantics of it really help when you change it. For instance, they say contractions, and contractions is the worst word you can possibly use. Right. It's not calming at all.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Well, it's also tightening and small and constricted, which is the opposite of what the muscle movement is actually trying to do, which is to open your cervix. Am I correct? Yes, but it's opening your cervix by pushing your baby down against it. I mean, it's not an inaccurate word of what's happening to the womb. The uterus muscle is contracting like any other muscle would and creating a tension, but it's that tension that's pushing down to create an opening at your cervix, but it's just a harsh word.

GILLIAN SHURE: It's a harsh word, and just for me, they give you all these other words that I have taken to like wave or surge or rush. For me, those words are more fluid, and I'm kinesthetic too, so I'm very tactile. For me, that makes more sense.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: It is a wave. Again, it's still an accurate word. It's just a different imagery that comes along with it. I think from watching and hopefully helping a whole bunch of people give birth, it looks like when you do feel relaxed and safe, more than anything, that's when I just observe safe, then you tend to just not worry as much about the intensity that's happening inside you, and no matter how big it gets. One of the most intense births I was ever at, it just looked like lightning running through her body for a minute at a time every four minutes, three minutes, and she looked like a lightning rod just letting it run through with no fear, like knowing that this is big, this is intense, this is a lot of

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: feeling, and just not caring about it that much, breathing through it and surrendering to that big energy, that big power going through her. It was kind of incredible to watch, but the thing was she felt so safe. She surrounded herself with people that made her feel safe. She wore clothing that made her feel empowered, and she just had this intuitive sense like this is going to be bigger than anything I've ever done, but I'm okay with that, and it was very productive. Every surge was just productive. On the other side of that coin is somebody who, even if they're not very big surges, is really afraid, doesn't feel safe, then you fight, your body fights. That's what it's programmed to do, so this intensity

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: starts to build up, and you're pushing away from it and trying to make it not happen, make it stop. Even the language that comes out of you then becomes like, no, no, no, no, here comes another one. You're telling your body, no, no, no, no, we don't want this, this is bad, fight this, get rid of this. Then it becomes really intense as you fight yourself, you fight that lightning coming through you, and don't let it progress. I think that's the thing for what can make you feel safe, makes

all the difference, and a little bit of luck. Sometimes things just go askew and you can't control it. To the extent that you could control it, a little bit of luck would be. I loved how you just described that woman,

GILLIAN SHURE: and that would be like, how you just described that woman, that would be my birth plan, and that's what I want. I absolutely see you there. Thank you. I see you there, again with that tiny bit of luck. I was like, a couple weeks ago I was like, oh yeah, I'm not scared about birth, I'm fine, and now I'm like, a little scared about

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: birth. I think you'll be excited when it starts, you know? I think you will be. From what I know of you, I think when it starts you're not going to instantly feel fear, I think you'll feel excited. No, I think the unknown of all of it is probably scarier than the actual. Yeah, but it seems like going on a rollercoaster for the first time. You don't know this one, and you don't have that much control over it. If you surrender to it, you'll have a great ride. If you're terrified, you'll have a horrible ride, and you'll throw up. You'll probably throw up anyway.

GILLIAN SHURE: There is definitely the sensation of when you look down at your belly,

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: and you think about the size of your vagina. It's daunting. I've never had that exact sensation, but I hear where you're coming from. Right, how does that come through that? It works, it's designed to. Are you planning to labor at home for a while, go straight to the hospital?

GILLIAN SHURE: Labor at home as soon as possible. We don't live too far from cedars, and Nina will come over while we're doing that, and when she says so,

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: we go to the hospital. Do you have any specific comfort measures in mind? What do you mean? Like things that will help. Do you feel more safe and relaxed besides, you know, like, are you gonna listen to guided imageries or certain types of music? Are you going to have, I don't know, some people bring essential oils or?

GILLIAN SHURE: Yes, she brings oils, definitely changing the lighting with these battery-operated candles. Ooh, color or just tea light flickers? I think just plain.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: That's good. Are you a tub person or are you a bath person?

GILLIAN SHURE: Yes, hopefully, so they have tubs at Cedars.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: In some of the rooms.

GILLIAN SHURE: In some of the rooms, so we're gonna vision board that.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: All right.

GILLIAN SHURE: Yeah, vision board the tub and the wireless monitor.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh yeah, they have that too. It's like a little Bluetooth situation now. It's like really high tech. Yeah, where you don't have to be.

GILLIAN SHURE: And it's water-resistant, so you can kind of get in the shower and tub with it.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: That would be great. They have these, it's not too late. Maybe I'll give you one. I don't know when I see you next. Next week. Okay, if you haven't popped already, I'm gonna bring you a little gift. It's this little flower-shaped light that when it gets wet, it glows different colors. Oh, cool. And it's great for floating around the tub at Cedars because the only light in there is that big fluorescent light. And there's no outlets or anything. Can't plug anything in the bathroom. So if you shut it off, it's like totally dark. And if you leave it on, it's glaringly bright. So these little glow lights. Oh, that would be nice.

GILLIAN SHURE: We'll be your friend. Thank you.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: You're welcome.

GILLIAN SHURE: Yeah, and my husband is one to be reckoned with,

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: so I'll feel safe with him, you know? Are any of them hands-on? Because you said you're tactile.

GILLIAN SHURE: Yeah, so Nina's taught us ways to work together in that way and to lean on him and to use him. And we've also practiced some hypnobirthing stuff, which we'll see if I'm able to.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah, yeah. Well, look, it's a journey. There are stages. So I feel like for most people, it's helpful at some stage. Yeah.

GILLIAN SHURE: Maybe not the whole time. Right. So other than being at home or a birthing center, I think we're just gonna do the best we can. There is a part of me that really wants to do a home birth, but that ship has sailed.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: So you can do a home labor.

GILLIAN SHURE: Yeah, we'll do that.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: All right, well, I'm excited for you.

GILLIAN SHURE: Thank you.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I've been with you on this journey from day one.

GILLIAN SHURE: Well, even I went to you four times

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: before I did the transfer. Yeah, that's what I'm saying. I know you longer than this kid does.

GILLIAN SHURE: That's right.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I'm very excited for you. I do have this question though. My last question for you would be this. I love the birth vision that you have and where you're steering the path, but if things come up and you end up either wanting or needing to have some of the interventions, do you have space for that in your plan?

GILLIAN SHURE: I do. I mean, the ultimate goal is to have a healthy baby. So I'm not gonna put my will in front of that. I feel safe in having between Nina and Dr. Finke. So Dr. Finke is really great with working with doulas. And so I don't think we'll be doing any preemptive interventions, but if it's needed, of course.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Right, I don't foresee you having unnecessary interventions pushed upon you. But sometimes you get there and you're just like, oh, this is not what I thought it was. I'd like a little help.

GILLIAN SHURE: Yeah, I think it'll be disappointing and I'll deal with that. But I think probably if I have a healthy kid in my hand, I probably won't be lamenting my loss. And I'll probably be really happy because I will be on drugs, which is also great. Win-win.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Win-win. Well, thanks so much for coming in and sharing Gail with us.

GILLIAN SHURE: Thank you for having me.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Is there someplace we can find you online?

GILLIAN SHURE: I'm just Gillian Sher on Instagram,

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: although I'm a terrible user of it. Okay, so I look forward to your post once a quarter.

GILLIAN SHURE: Yeah, that's right.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And I'll be blasting the heck out of our stand-up comedy show whenever it comes together. I know. I can't wait to do it.

GILLIAN SHURE: I know, but now you're gonna have the kid

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: and then you're gonna- Yeah, but it'll give me going to the cave for a little bit. Then you'll have to write a little material and then we'll be good to go. Yeah.

GILLIAN SHURE: All right. Thank you.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: You're welcome.

GILLIAN SHURE: Thanks for being here and at home.

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