Zombiemum

Episode 222 · March 31, 2021 · with Laura Dockrill

IN THIS EPISODE

Something different this time: a sample of Zombiemum, the podcast that writer and illustrator Laura Dockrill launched after a traumatic delivery and a diagnosis of postpartum psychosis left her determined to talk honestly about the parts of motherhood nobody warns you about. In this excerpt, Laura talks with a singer who is pregnant with her second child and determined not to hide away this time — documenting a pregnancy lived in the public eye, from a glittery catsuit on Jonathan Ross to working through the fear left behind by a traumatic first birth. Along the way: why going back to work can be part of finding yourself again, raising a daughter who knows what makes her mother happy, and stopping a gig at the O2 to text the babysitter. What does she wish someone had told her the first time around?

About this transcript: *This transcript was created with AI-assisted transcription and reviewed by our team. It may not be 100% accurate — names, medical terms, and phrasing can occasionally be mis-transcribed. For exact wording, please listen to the episode audio.*

NARRATOR: When the illustrator and writer Laura Dockrell became a mum the experience was life-changing But not in the way she was expecting after having a traumatic delivery and a diagnosis of postpartum Psychosis Laura realized there were important aspects of motherhood that aren't being talked about nearly enough. So what did she do? She launched a podcast called zombie mum to get the conversation going each week Laura is joined by fellow parents who also didn't have the picture-perfect journey to parenthood that they had anticipated Whatever you're feeling you're not alone with a zombie mum the podcast Normalizing conversations about mental health and parenthood new episodes drop every Tuesday on Apple podcast Spotify stitcher

NARRATOR: Or wherever you listen to podcasts. Here's a sample of Laura Dockrell's zombie mum

LAURA DOCKRILL: You were the only person really that told me how hard it was actually When I was about to have jet you did say that it's really hard and I remember really Valuing that because I think your natural setting as a human is like boy and I'll be that When you told me it's hard. I was like, okay, this is real talk

GUEST: I had no idea that you had gone through so much and it was so worth it so worth it that I'm doing it

LAURA DOCKRILL: Again, I know so you're doing it all again and this time around you're I'm just so amazed and proud you're documenting and you're Writing these accounts. I think it's really cool. You're kind of drawing these Boundaries between you and the rest of the world being like I think you said it's not neat You know, I'm not a neat pregnant person It's like you're kind of giving yourself permission going back off This is my space and I'm gonna do it But also you're saving so many people as well doing this in the public eye. How do you think? Pregnant women are treated in the kind of public eye women in general pregnant person What is the expectations and pressures put on us?

GUEST: there aren't that many people in the public eye who are pregnant in front of the camera and I don't feel like for me it's ideal because it's not comfortable For example, the other day I was on Jonathan Ross Wearing a glittery cat suit and I was like I can't cross my legs I it's so uncomfortable But I literally can't see it with my legs open in front of the camera that's pointed straight at me So it was like really uncomfortable and I would say that just in general like people have this sort of weird thing with pregnant women, which is like a contrast between Like a molly coddling of them physically like don't lift that don't lift that and all of that

GUEST: Versus this lack of true understanding of like what you actually need like I'm happy to carry a bag. I Understand why not many women do it in the public eye and I'm doing it not because I want to make a point I'm doing it because it just happens to coincide with When I plan to put my record out and just like a lot of working women even though it's a very different sort of set of circumstances You know if you go to work and you get pregnant you just work at the same time And I just think I want to sort of normalize it in the sense of being a famous person I think people in the public eye often hide away for it And I did the first time and I'm glad I did the first time because it was I didn't know what to expect and it was

LAURA DOCKRILL: Scary it feels like we have like a get-on-with-it attitude where and especially, you know If you're working as well as you just said and I actually love that. I didn't even think about it It's so obvious. Like why shouldn't you know if woman still got to she works in a bank or she works in a school She's a doctor. She still has to go To work, so why should you preserve yourself and hide like the most natural thing that you do but also spinning plates You know, it's like you can't stop working You're the one that puts food on the table and yeah So I feel like that's so much of our identity as well, isn't it? Like I you know, it's that I started to recover and feel better not even just from my illness

LAURA DOCKRILL: but as what happened as a mum when I started working.

GUEST: Yeah, same. And actually now I'm raising my daughter to know that that's what makes mommy happy. Like when she says, why do you have to go to work? So that we can have food on the table. I say, I say like, so that there's food, the light switch goes on and off, clothes, toys, and the best bit is it makes me happy.

LAURA DOCKRILL: And I think that's so important for her to know

GUEST: that like work doesn't need to just be about finances.

LAURA DOCKRILL: That's already an education from the beginning, isn't it? This visibility, you're not showing this is mommies can sometimes do this and daddies can do this. It's there and it's the life that we live.

GUEST: Totally.

LAURA DOCKRILL: So you're pregnant again, how do you feel?

GUEST: Well, it's interesting because I'm so happy about having another baby because my first baby is like the greatest thing that's ever happened to me. But I do think I've got post-traumatic stress disorder a bit with it. Like recently I went to a scan and they said that I've got this thing called placenta previa, which is where the placenta sort of sits over the cervix. The doctor said like, it means that if it doesn't go up, which more often than not, apparently it does. But if it doesn't, it means that there's a big risk of excessive bleeding. And she was like, oh, don't worry, we have loads of blood in the room. And it was like a normal mind would be like, okay, great, I'm in good hands. But my thing was just like,

GUEST: I didn't react like a normal person because I think I still haven't fully recovered from the trauma of the first one and what happened. And now I sort of feel more scared because I've got my daughter that's already on this earth that I care about so much. And I just went into this weird thing of like, I was just worried for days that I was gonna die. And I was like reacting like somebody who'd been told they were gonna die. And then, but then like everyone's like, first of all, nine out of 10 placentas go back up again. And also like a lot of people have it and have the operation and it's all fine. Like, and I was just like convinced. I was, and I was crying all the time and I was really depressed and sort of angry at myself

GUEST: for wanting another child, almost for putting myself in jeopardy when I feel so responsible for my child that I've got already. I'm more worried than I was the first pregnancy because of what happened with the first one.

LAURA DOCKRILL: Do you kind of feel like how did you not know? How did nobody tell you that you could feel that bad from just having a baby? There's not really our illnesses exposed.

GUEST: Yeah, like there's no truth about it. And also a lot of people say postpartum depression but they don't really tell you what that means. And as somebody like yourself who's always been quite an optimist and sort of like the go-to person for a lot of people to make them feel buoyant and lift them up. I'd never really experienced that level of sadness before and it was quite alien to me to feel that way. So now I'm sort of like caught between an overwhelming sense of joy that I'll be able to do it again and that maybe I'll be able to rectify some of the mistakes I made before. I'm going to try not to doubt my relationship with my child or be so insecure about it so that I can then accept help from other people.

GUEST: And I think last time I just tried to do everything by myself and it was too much and going on tour with a baby of seven months and I just was like a mess. I was like on stage in like a poppy outfit, lactating, I was crying on stage.

LAURA DOCKRILL: I remember you saying, and I know this is horrible because it's your like misery moment but for me, you saying that, it made me feel so much less broken myself. Like I was just like,

God, it isn't just me but you've got that image where you were like standing on stage singing with tears just streaming down your face. But that's what women are facing. That's what they're doing, aren't they?

GUEST: I just did it because I'd sold all those tickets. I remember on the stage at the O2 and I was like saying to however many people to fill the O2, it was like 18, 20,000 people. And I was like, I'm just gonna text the girl that's looking after the baby just to see if. And I stopped my gig to do a text as she is sleeping.

LAURA DOCKRILL: I love that, but it's true. You wouldn't be able to sing but you wouldn't be able to if you were.

GUEST: I was like. need to know because all I'm thinking about is that and I can't remember the lyrics. Never un-thought it was like a bit of a stand-up and laughing, but it wasn't, it was genuine.

LAURA DOCKRILL: It's like the umbilical cord has never been cut, isn't it? It's like you can't fully the next thing until you know they're okay and they're at peace.

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