Anastasiya Kukhtareva - After Birth

Episode 254 · November 4, 2021 · with Anastasiya Kukhtareva

IN THIS EPISODE

Anastasiya Kukhtareva is back — now a mom of two — to tell Dr. Elliot Berlin, DC how her second birth unfolded. In her Before Birth episode (Ep. 253), she shared how her first baby's planned hospital vaginal birth ended in a cesarean she had not wanted, and how she made a very different plan the second time around: a trial of labor after cesarean, at home with midwives. The end of this pregnancy was uncharacteristically surrendered for a self-described planner — no obsessing over the when, even though her due date carried deep family meaning: it was her late mother-in-law's birthday. Anastasiya talks about the slower, more holistic rhythm of her final midwife appointments, stocking the house with flowers, candles, and a rented tub, and why she chose not to tell her own family about the home birth plan. Then, on the due date itself, a first contraction arrived at a bridal salon — would labor fade like the first time, or build? A dinner out and a James Bond movie were still on the agenda. How fast would things move once they got home, would her toddler sleep through it, would her midwives arrive in time — and would the tub ever even get filled?

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DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Welcome to the informed pregnancy podcast. I'm your host dr Ellie Berlin you've tuned into the after episode of a before and after birth story My guest today had a planned vaginal birth at the hospital with her first baby It didn't go that way and then she made other plans for her second pregnancy and delivery Last time we talked to her she was due in just a couple of weeks And now she had the baby just a couple of weeks ago on the stage at cook that ever welcome back to the podcast

ANASTASIYA KUKHTAREVA: Thank you so much

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Congratulations. Thank you So just as a recap your first birth you labored at home for a bit

ANASTASIYA KUKHTAREVA: Yes, so we labored for the way that I think about it is a night and a day and Went to the hospital like around 6 p.m The following day so I guess like 12 hours of like

irregular contractions and then active labor started at

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Around 6 p.m. The following night. Well, I see and then once you're in the hospital It didn't take long before you were encouraged to break the water

ANASTASIYA KUKHTAREVA: Correct and at the time that seemed like a decent idea and in retrospect not as great an idea

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Right. Okay, so water broke and they told you not to bear down But the only thing your body felt like doing after your water broke was bearing down and then your cervix wouldn't dilate more than 10-centimeters there was distress and you ended up in a cesarean birth now I got the sense from talking to you in the pre birth episode that Mechanically the cesarean birth was fine. Everything went well, you know It had been your mode of delivery choice then would have been an excellent experience is just more emotionally That's not what you wanted and didn't necessarily have to go there. So in that way, it wasn't very exciting to you Okay, then still recapping you made plans. You got pregnant again, and you said you know what?

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I'm gonna do this differently I'm gonna try for a vaginal birth after cesarean be back or a trial of labor after cesarean tolac But I'm gonna do it at home with midwives. So then they call it home birth after cesarean or H back Even though the baby doesn't come out of the house, it's still an HB back Okay, and that's where we left you you're a couple of weeks before your due date and you were feeling pretty good and Very confident and excited and just a touch nervous. I really was outshadowed by the other feelings when we were talking So how was the rest of your pregnancy?

ANASTASIYA KUKHTAREVA: It was good. I mean I Relaxed a lot I took kind of the week before our due date off of work and you know Just kind of was trying to not I guess be stressed or be anxious about anything and just kind of Read and you know hang out. Well and also with a toddler Right. Well, yes. There's also yes our toddler And then kind of you know trying to spend every precious moment with him as our only baby

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Right when taking off from work, but not taking out from your other main job, right Don Quixote 25 eight Right. And so in the end of your pregnancy, or you comfortable

ANASTASIYA KUKHTAREVA: Yeah, I mean, you know as comfortable as you can be I suppose was to giving birth, you know, I think I had a lot more round ligament pain this time around. And a lot more what they like to call lightning crotch, which I don't love that very descriptive term. Yeah, but you know, feeling good. Yeah, good overall, you know, nothing really out of the ordinary, I suppose.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And lightning crotch to me is what happens when you volunteer at Little League. Somebody somebody hits an errant ball, double entendre. Okay, so at some point, do you start to, I mean, always no matter what kind of birth you have, it's a kind of a five week window from 37 to 42 weeks. So even with our babies, like after 37 weeks, you know, I just always leave the house wondering if I'm going to get a call right back or, you know, just laying in bed wondering, is it going to be tonight is going to be this week is going to be a couple of weeks? Does that happen to you?

ANASTASIYA KUKHTAREVA: I really tried not to do that this time around, like I kind of was like, in my head, I was like, the baby is going to be late. I don't know why I feel this way, but I just I'm going to like, let that be sort of whatever intuitive vibe that I have. So I honestly just tried not to kind of stress about the when and just was like, all right, well, whatever happens happens, which is different for me, I must say,

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: because you're a planner.

ANASTASIYA KUKHTAREVA: I'm a planner, I like to be in control.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: So hard to surrender with that operating system.

ANASTASIYA KUKHTAREVA: Yes, it was it was something I worked on a lot.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Cool. And so you succeeded in the last weeks. How are mid wife appointments? And since you've had both models of care, how do they differ from the last couple of OB appointments?

ANASTASIYA KUKHTAREVA: I mean, for me, in general, those appointments were really great, because you really spend the time talking about the anxieties that you have. And just all the questions that you know, not maybe not necessarily like specifically medical questions, but a lot more holistic, I would say. So I guess those last appointments were really like, well, what do you think? When do you think we're going into labor? And like really talking about it, which maybe also helped give space for those anxieties and help me sort of surrender.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And are they typically at your home? Or do you go to their office?

ANASTASIYA KUKHTAREVA: So the last few appointments were mostly at the office with one home visit just to make sure that we knew where everything was, etc.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And what kind of stuff did you bring into the house to prepare for home birth?

ANASTASIYA KUKHTAREVA: We brought flowers, and candles and I had string lights, and all that. But we didn't have time to put anything up.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, oh, I guess we'll get to that in a second. Anything medical or things that you have to bring or order? And also, did you have a tub?

ANASTASIYA KUKHTAREVA: Yes, we rented a tub and we had a birth kit that we had ordered and made sure you know, we had all of those postpartum stuff and all of that stuff ready.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: What was the plan for your toddler?

ANASTASIYA KUKHTAREVA: The plan was sort of fluid. Like if the birth happened at night, we didn't want to wake him up. And then we had friends that were ready to come get him. Like we are we are neighbors who are good friends live three doors down. So yeah, they would come grab him and we had a backup plan and then my family as well. So

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: okay, so your premonition is that you're going to go wait, which I assume in your lexicon means after 40 weeks.

ANASTASIYA KUKHTAREVA: Yes, exactly.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Okay. But you're surrendered, you're uncharacteristically surrendered to whatever might happen.

ANASTASIYA KUKHTAREVA: Right. Well, the other thing I should mention is our due date. And I know you're not supposed to put a lot of stock in the due date, but our due date happened to be my mother-in-law's birthday. And she passed away in January of this year. So I know it was one of those things where we were again, trying to sort of let go of that because it had a lot of, you know, emotions attached to it. And we felt like it was such a special thing that again, even if it's a due range or whatever, in the way that we want to think about birth, it just felt like a really special date.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah, for sure. My first two kids and my son, who's the oldest, is named after my dad who passed when I was a teenager. And then the second one, her due date was my birthday, which is May 13th, but my wife went into labor on April 30th. And things just started to really pick up around six or 7pm. No, it was even later. And yeah, the first contraction actually was 8pm. And I just at that moment, I realized, oh my goodness, she's gonna have my father's birthday May 1st. And I was like blown over. My son's named after my dad, my daughter's gonna have his birthday. Anyway, she came like minutes before midnight.

ANASTASIYA KUKHTAREVA: Wow.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: So she does not have his birthday. It's April 30th, but I always say, you know, we're New Yorkers. And in New York, it was May 1st. So I'm going with that.

ANASTASIYA KUKHTAREVA: Amazing.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Uh, anyway, very special day coming up. Your scene is set, your mind is relaxed and who knows what happens next. We're going to find out right after this break. We'll be right back. Welcome back to the Informed Pregnancy podcast. We're talking to Anastasia Kuchkareva. And I don't know, I'm bursting to find out what happened. There's so much drama here. Is this going to be at nighttime when your son will be sleeping? Do the neighbors from Three Doors Down have to come pick him up? And then also is it going to be on your due date, which is your recently passed mother-in-law's birthday? There's so much drama. I don't know how you let go. I'm not that much of a control freak and I'm having trouble letting go.

ANASTASIYA KUKHTAREVA: Well, the thing that we kept telling ourselves is like, you know, the thing is it's so special that that's even the due date, you know? So we like have that, right? So we have that and now we can sort of move forward.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Where in relation to your due date, did your labor start?

ANASTASIYA KUKHTAREVA: So on the day.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, wow. What time?

ANASTASIYA KUKHTAREVA: So around one o'clock, I was actually at a bridal salon with a friend. Like she was trying on wedding dresses. It just happened to be like the only day that worked for both of us. So in clear petty bone, like I had my first contraction at around noon, I guess, or one, one o'clock.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: No, before that, were you having warmup activity?

ANASTASIYA KUKHTAREVA: No, that was the first one.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Wow. Okay. And was it strong out of the gate?

ANASTASIYA KUKHTAREVA: No. So it was pretty mild. I mean, I knew it was a contraction and then the next one didn't come for about an hour and a half and actually we had made plans because it was my mother-in-law's birthday. So I had made a plan for my mom to come over to like, you know, take care of our toddler while I took my husband out to the movies on our due date, but I was like, ah, you know, we're going to go late. So we decided, you know what, like contractions are still like an hour and a half to an hour apart. Like, I know the drill cause in the last birth that happened for a full night and a full day. So I was like, we definitely have time to go to dinner and go to, you know, two and a half hour James Bond movie. So that was the plan.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I'm just curious, did you even tell your Dula midwives that you were having some really contractions?

ANASTASIYA KUKHTAREVA: So I told our Dula and I was like, am I? crazy for you know going out knowing that I'm starting to have some activity and she'd said you know like maybe it's a good way to distract yourself and you know labor can be so unpredictable

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: so the lighting is just right in the movie theater just in case the baby comes through exactly so we proceeded with the plan and there's no tub but that popcorn only comes in tub sizes so plenty of tubs right so there's no plan and you're just watching a movie James Bond is that what you said yeah okay I'm just picturing the scene okay so James Bond movie

ANASTASIYA KUKHTAREVA: and plenty of room because of social distancing exactly yeah and it was the theater where the seats were climbed so yeah so maybe it was crazy but we went to dinner and at dinner contractions started going at around 30 minutes apart but like still you know 30 45 minutes so we decided to go to the theater and made it through all of the trailers and maybe 20 minutes of the film until it got to be eight minutes apart and it started getting to be fairly strong wow and meanwhile I'm texting our midwife I'm texting our doula just kind of updating them and then like I made the call that we should go we should go home oh wow

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: otherwise they would have to meet you in the lobby or whatever I don't know the photo booth yeah I pictured it um wow that's crazy so it picked up really quickly from every 30 minutes

ANASTASIYA KUKHTAREVA: to every eight minutes yeah so it picked up really quickly and again I still sort of was like you know what's the unofficial rule or whatever is four minutes apart one minute long for an hour right so I was like we still have plenty of time so we got home um said goodbye to my

mother we're sort of like oh we're so tired oh you didn't tell her we didn't tell her because I didn't actually tell my family that we were planned oh for a home birth there was also a little bit of drama involved there not for any reason except that I just honestly like we're really close and that sounds kind of counterintuitive that like why wouldn't I tell my family if we're so close but it's because we're so close that I just

ANASTASIYA KUKHTAREVA: didn't want to give anybody any sort of opportunity to like have opinions or stress you know and have that unnecessary stress because that would cause me stress or stress for you and stress for a relationship for people you really care about exactly and I just wanted to avoid all of that yeah are they pretty medical people um I mean yes and no my parents are both scientists like my mom has a friend who's an ob-gyn whose first response to me getting pregnant again was like so when are you scheduling the c-section which I was like like I guess I just don't want her talking to that friend right and that makes sense

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I mean it really does make sense it's counterintuitive at the first thought but then it really makes sense but she didn't notice anything in your house like a tub or

ANASTASIYA KUKHTAREVA: extra candles and flowers no she didn't and I went and had a contraction in the bathroom again they were manageable still at that point which is crazy to think about because of how

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: fast things progress but I'm also just thinking what's going through your head while you're in the bathroom having a hideaway contraction while your husband shows your mother out of the

ANASTASIYA KUKHTAREVA: house what was going through my head I was just sort of like all right this is exciting like it's happening like you know in my head I'm like we're meeting our baby tomorrow like the

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: eighth is a really great number ah so not that anybody else would care and I don't even know why I care what did you have for dinner before this all started so we went to donkukos and I had the steak a la diablo oh wow I think that could put me into labor okay so you're hiding in the bathroom having contractions mom leaves mom leaves so then we call

ANASTASIYA KUKHTAREVA: our doula and you know it's starting to get more intense and we're like okay like I think it's time for you to come you know I feel like because of how fast it's going it'll probably progress even faster so then we called our midwife and at this point I'm still talking through like in between contractions so we called our midwife's name is abby we called abby and then maybe five ten minutes after that like I literally just like kind of fell to the floor not fell but like had to get on the floor and like had started feeling the sensation to push oh wow yeah so then that was literally five ten minutes after that call to abby but then I was like then we need to call her now she needs to come now quick question so

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: during the contractions before you went down where did you feel those I guess in my belly okay so not really in your back no great and then also when you told Abby the progression of how quickly things were moving what was her response at first I don't think she realized how fast it was progressing until she heard

ANASTASIYA KUKHTAREVA: me and she was like yep I'm getting in the car right now well that's telemedicine for you yeah you can tell on over the phone so then I guess like and this part not that it gets blurry for me but it definitely gets a little bit more sort of inward because I'm focusing on getting through contractions in the background it's like my husband's running around like getting the bed ready like again we had nothing set up because we just didn't you know we hadn't really thought that it was gonna happen this quickly meanwhile you know Abby's like okay like get her to the bed well Abby came at this point Abby's on FaceTime with my husband okay what time is it because you were at the bridal store at one at one we left the

ANASTASIYA KUKHTAREVA: movie around I probably have the text chain with Abby but 830 or something like that okay well maybe it's like nine okay very quick very quick so Abby calls Ben on FaceTime she's driving I'm on our bed having contractions with the birth ball nobody else is here yet and then Abby I guess says to my husband and I hear this you know obviously like as I'm going through all this and she's like okay Ben look we're at a space now where you might have to receive this baby and I want you to know that you guys can call 9-1-1 in this situation if you would like you know if you feel but I think you're gonna do great and you know she's giving him instructions meanwhile I'm like trying to do candle like I also

ANASTASIYA KUKHTAREVA: hear her sort of coaching me like you know try to breathe slowly and you know sort of like to slow it down but just to give her time to get there because they were about 20 minutes away and so like those 20 minutes I guess I was trying to like not have the baby were you nervous in your mind I didn't really have time to be anything really except for just kind of like so just instinct yeah I mean I will say I was screaming pretty loudly and we were a little bit worried that we're gonna wake up well I wasn't again like I wasn't anything and my husband later tells me he was like trying to close the door so that our toddler doesn't wake up at this point because like I said I didn't have time I

ANASTASIYA KUKHTAREVA: didn't remember anything it just was like all right this is happening and I just need to get through it you know and trying to sort of tell myself to surrender to it I mean you said

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: getting the bed ready but you also have plans for a tub did the tub ever get filled up so no the tub never got filled up oh my goodness cliffhanger we're gonna take a break and when we come back we'll find out the rest of the story welcome back to the informed pregnancy podcast it's getting very very exciting here things are moving very quickly the midwives are very close by Ben's getting the bed ready and you're just spaced out and letting your body just do her thing without you overthinking it yes something like that now you're overthinking

ANASTASIYA KUKHTAREVA: it yes okay so did the midwives make it so yes so the midwives made it and my doula arrived shortly thereafter which was great because I was kind of ready for some coaching and some help and some cool cloths on my face and you know all of the wonderful things that come with the safety and security of having your team there so everybody arrived and it felt really good to have everybody there because you know as much as I know that Ben could have caught the baby like I would prefer him not to have exactly and for there to be professionals to catch the baby yeah and it was really nice to have them there and then yeah I guess like the next thing that I

remember is just sort of being like okay like so what do I do now like we're here we're

ANASTASIYA KUKHTAREVA: in this moment you know and I was like what's happening I was like do I start pushing and they were like you are pushing so I guess that's what was happening is that I was in fact pushing that was what the bearing down was feeling the pressure then there was like some activity like Ben was trying to get the tub blown up but we weren't gonna have time like the midwives said we weren't gonna have time But, you know, he also knew that I really wanted to be in water. And so I don't know who made the suggestion, but we were like, what about the bathtub? So that's what we did. We filled up the bathtub and at some point in there, my water broke.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Whoa, slow down. Okay. First of all, is this like a regular standard size bathtub? Just a regular standard size bathtub. So room for one plus an infant seems to be newborn, I guess. And then your water broke in there. Did you feel it?

ANASTASIYA KUKHTAREVA: Yes. So my water broke while I was still on our bed.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, not in the tub.

ANASTASIYA KUKHTAREVA: Not in the tub. No, no. And Abby was like, if you want to go, we need to go now basically to the tub. And that was probably the hardest contraction. I mean, besides actual pushing was sort of the one in between getting from the bed to the tub. Cause I was sort of standing up being supported, you know, and sort of like, is this crazy? That we're moving right now, but they were like, if you want to do it, let's go. You know, like it's your choice. You know? And so we made it to the tub and it felt really great. I mean, I guess like as great as it can feel when you're still having painful contractions.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh yeah. It sounds like you felt a difference between contractions on land and contractions in water.

ANASTASIYA KUKHTAREVA: I did. Yeah. It was much more relaxing. I mean, it was still painful, but I always feel at ease in water. Like I love the ocean and I love taking baths. It felt very comforting.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Nice. Okay. So your goal with water, was it to labor in water, deliver in water or both?

ANASTASIYA KUKHTAREVA: I wasn't sure. I just knew that like being in water would be relaxing for me and would be like a safe space.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: So from the beginning, your plan was just to have it as an option.

ANASTASIYA KUKHTAREVA: Yes, exactly. Okay. So then once we were in the tub, I mean, I don't know how many contractions, but basically like we pushed the baby's head out and then there were a couple contractions with just the baby's head out. And then I had this moment where I guess I was like, I wasn't sure if it was possible for me to push through this level of pain. And then I had to go like sort of a step beyond that. And that's kind of when the baby came out.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I have a couple of questions. Did anybody check your cervix at any point?

ANASTASIYA KUKHTAREVA: No.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Not necessary?

ANASTASIYA KUKHTAREVA: Not necessary.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah. Okay. I'm sure they listened to the fetal hard tones and things like that. And then when the baby's head came out, what did that feel like to you?

ANASTASIYA KUKHTAREVA: It was probably the most painful part. I mean, I definitely felt sort of the ring of fire and not that there was that much relief in between contractions, but when the baby's head was out, there was no relief because it was like, it's different. I mean, it was a different type of pain because at that point, like pushing felt almost good, but then there was this other level of pain. So, yeah, that was probably the hardest part.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And is the baby underwater? Okay, so the baby's head is out underwater and you still have a few contractions until the rest of the body comes out. Is that a calm couple of contractions in terms of nobody really panicking because the shoulders didn't just pop right out?

ANASTASIYA KUKHTAREVA: No, I mean, calm in the sense of like, the space was calm, I guess. Like I was sort of like, what? You know, but yeah, I mean, because there was no panic to be had, like it was as calm as could be, I suppose.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah, I just have the images in my head from births that I attended where, especially in a hospital setting, once that head comes out, they just seem to be in a rush to get the rest of the body out. So they take the head and kind of maneuver the baby using the head as the pivot point, you know, pulling a little this way, pulling all that way. But it sounds like in your case, you just rested and waited for your body to bring the rest of the baby out.

ANASTASIYA KUKHTAREVA: Yeah, that pretty much describes it. Yeah. And then I remember Abby saying, reach out and pick up your baby. And I was like, what? OK. And then she held her head up and really looked at us like, we have this great picture that our doula took of her just really staring at my husband, really connecting with him. It was pretty incredible.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: No crying right away.

ANASTASIYA KUKHTAREVA: No, unlike my son who came out screaming,

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: like she was very kind of like looking around and kind of very peaceful. That's exactly how I would describe our water birth with my son. My youngest was our only home birth and it was a water birth. And he came out, he had these beautiful blue eyes. And even before we took him out of the water, you could see them in the water because she hadn't been in there very long, probably with you, too. Not all that discolored by fluids and things. And, you know, she just took him out and held him up and he was. just looking like, oh, I guess you must be my parents, you know, something like that. Yeah, it was pretty special. I thought for sure when he realized I'm his daddy was going to cry, but no.

ANASTASIYA KUKHTAREVA: That sounds amazing.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: If you're in the water and your baby comes out, do you stay there to deliver your placenta or do you get out?

ANASTASIYA KUKHTAREVA: We drain the water to make sure that there wasn't anything happening and there was a fair amount of blood, so they gave me pitocin. But then when the placenta was delivered, my midwife said that the presentation was the kind where the blood comes out first versus usually the placenta comes out and then there's blood behind it. Yeah, blood behind it. She just wanted to make sure there wasn't a hemorrhage or anything like that. So honestly, that was the only part of our birth that I was like, oh, like that's a little, well, besides also Ben potentially having to receive the baby, but those are the only two times where I was like, oh, that's a little, you know, shakes me a little bit, but then it was fine and everything was fine.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I feel like that moment when the baby comes out, no matter what led up to that moment, whether it was five hours and 50 hours, whether it was super intense or just fairly mellow, the second that baby comes out is just like the new chapter starts right then and there. And it's a powerful moment, especially in these home settings and without the medication, without a bunch of bright lights, without a bunch of people just surgically moving around you. And I mean that even from a vaginal birth, it's just a powerful moment. And usually there's tears involved and just this massive feeling of like, wow, the baby's here. Wow. I did that. I wonder if you had that moment. And if you did, I wonder if you feel like it was different for you because of

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: your VBAT journey, then it would be just, let's say for a first birth.

ANASTASIYA KUKHTAREVA: I mean, absolutely. I feel like it was a completely different experience. I feel with Dorian's birth, I just remember being so cold and shaking and not fully being able to hold my baby by myself because I'm shaking and on operating table. And I just was like so scared that I was going to drop him. Not that I like wanted them to take him away. I just wasn't in that head space. And, you know, that was another thing that I sort of had to process is like not having that moment of like total elation, you know, that I have read about or heard about from other mamas. And so this was a completely different experience. It was so much awe and just like, holy crap. Like that just happened so fast. It was really fast and it was very intense.

ANASTASIYA KUKHTAREVA: And I remember like one of the first things I said, I can see how home birth isn't for everyone because it was so intense, you know?

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And yeah, you had a concentrated work though. You had all of your labor and just a few hours.

ANASTASIYA KUKHTAREVA: Yeah. And looking back on it now, I'm like, it was beautiful and it was amazing, you know, but it was also very intense and like all of those things are true. But yeah, but being able to just be with our baby and not have, you know, I mean with the midwives, it's like they set us up in our room and aren't cozy in our bed and she latched right away. And we, you know, we truly had that kind of our snuggling in bed, you know, looking at our new baby. And it was really beautiful after the birth and just being like, can you believe that that just happened?

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: That's so special. Okay. So you had talked about your mother-in-law's birthday, your recently deceased mother-in-law's birthday being your due date. And we know that you

went into labor, uh, somewhere around one o'clock in a bridal shop on your due date, did the baby make it in time for the due date, or is it the day after?

ANASTASIYA KUKHTAREVA: So the baby arrived at 11, 13 PM. So she just in time.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Wow. Was that an immediate quick when she was out?

ANASTASIYA KUKHTAREVA: No. Well, yes. I mean, it was like, you know, she made it just in time, you know, to be on my mother-in-law's name was Lois on Lo's birthday, but it's so funny because at dinner, my husband had said, he was like, mom wouldn't have wanted to share her birthday anyways. And so we, we were joking, like, well, actually she just, you know, like told us, right? Like she showed us that. Yes. In fact, she did.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I would like to share my birthday. Well, that's very cute. My bratty kid came out just a few minutes too early, but So I'm glad it worked out for you. I have two more questions for you. And I know you have a full-time job now taking care of a toddler and a newborn. My first question is, in your experience, different for everybody, how would you compare the recovery from your cesarean birth and your vaginal home birth?

ANASTASIYA KUKHTAREVA: Well, I would say both recoveries are pretty gnarly, but I will say that this type of recovery, I think will be over faster. And I was honestly surprised by, it's different, it's a different type of recovery. But because I didn't have it last time, I was like, is this really how human beings come into the world? Is this what happens? But it has, I mean, I feel so much better already. I'm more up and around and obviously able to lift my toddler now, which I wouldn't have been able to do if I had a C-section.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: But it sounds like either way you're recovering from, I hate to use the word trauma, but trauma, right? So either you're having surgical procedures done where there's trauma that we use to get the baby out safely, but then there's also just some natural trauma that happens when the baby comes out of you naturally. Yeah, and I think they're both very different, but obviously I have a lot of respect for all women.

ANASTASIYA KUKHTAREVA: Yes, that's the bottom line.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: All right, you ready for my last question?

ANASTASIYA KUKHTAREVA: Yes.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I wish I could see video of this, but how did your mom and family react when you gave them the full story?

ANASTASIYA KUKHTAREVA: They were really wonderful. My mom was, I mean, she hasn't told me that it hurt her feelings, but I think it did a little bit, but she reacted really beautifully to it. She was like, that sounds so lovely and that's so beautiful that you got to do that in water. So she was wonderful. And I think she would have been wonderful, again, as long as she didn't talk to her friend.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: So that's my other question. Did you hear from her friend as her friend?

ANASTASIYA KUKHTAREVA: No, I haven't. I haven't, but I'm curious. I'm curious, yeah. And again, I just wanted to avoid all of that. It's funny. I was thinking about this today. There's not a lot of people that I've actively told about my decision to have a home birth. It's not like a secret. Like I told people, they asked me like, oh, what's your plan? You know, I would share that with them, but I didn't like actively tell people about it just because I wanted to keep it kind of, I don't know. Again, I didn't really want opinions or anybody else's fear or anxiety about it.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: That makes a lot of sense to me. People are very strongly opinionated about all things, pregnancy, childbirth, and newborn and postpartum. And, you know, if you've made up your mind and you've studied the pros and cons and what your risks and rewards are, and you made an informed choice, then you don't want people imposing their opinions on you. So I think you did a smart thing. And then it's also, you know, for them, it's a lot easier if you're like, we had a beautiful home birth than we're planning to have the baby at home. Yeah. It's an easier conversation.

ANASTASIYA KUKHTAREVA: Yeah, and for me, it was really, it's like, if I could have the pain-free version at home, sure, that would be amazing, but I wasn't willing to give up all the things that I guess like come with a hospital birth. Like I wasn't willing to do that this time around. It does sort of feel like you check your freedom at the door.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah. On the way into the hospital. And it's just the way the system is set up is that we'll tell you what you can do and what you can't do and when you can do it and you can't do it. And there's a lot of variation in there. That's a generalization. Some doctors and midwives at hospitals are very open-minded, very supportive of whatever plan you have. And other ones are kind of pretty rigid in their plan and it's just more paternalistic. We'll tell you what to do and you just do it. At home, the contrast that I see between home birth and hospital birth when I attend birth is at the hospital, there's a lot of asking the staff, hey, can I do this? Am I allowed to do that? Is it all right if I eat this? And at home, it's the exact opposite.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: People are asking you, hey, do you mind if I use this blanket? Or it's just, you're clearly the one steering the wheel.

ANASTASIYA KUKHTAREVA: Yeah. I mean, I really loved that aspect of the experience. And just being at home, I felt safer, to be honest. I felt safer at home. I felt more comfortable. And it wasn't, for me, it wasn't about, oh, can I do this? Or all of that. It was just, I don't know. I wanted to just have that freedom, I guess, to experience all of it, all of the sensations of it, all of it.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: One of the things that you said is I felt safer at home. My final thought on this whole idea is that you gotta give birth where you feel safe. Some people feel a lot safer at a hospital or at a birthing center or at home. And nobody can really feel how you feel. So, you know, they could say, hey, you're safer to hospital because of X, Y, Z, but there's a strong feeling that if you don't feel safe, it's very hard for your body to relax and let this labor progress smoothly and naturally. And look what happened at home years went so quickly. I recommend that everybody try to get into a bond movie. If you're trying to get things moving and maybe have the spicy popcorn. Okay. So, Anastasia, I'm so, so thrilled for you. Happy for you.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: It was flowing with goodness for you that you had this beautiful experience that you wanted. And one of my patients once told me that she looked at her caesarean scar. She was really pushed into a caesarean that she didn't want, didn't need. And she looked at her caesarean scar as a frowny face. And when she had her V-back, it was turned around into a smile for her. And I know that you came out of your first birth somewhat frowny, excited, happy, grateful, but somewhat frowny about the experience. And I can see on your face right now, even though the listeners can't, that it is very, very smiley. So I'm super happy for you. You deserve it. You work for it. And you're absolutely right.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: However people do this, however women do it is absolutely insane and amazing. And I'm grateful. I think we're all grateful to you guys.

ANASTASIYA KUKHTAREVA: Thank you. Yeah, I mean, I'm thrilled with the experience and, you know, like I said, I don't think it's for everybody. I think it's definitely such a personal decision. But for us, it was like the absolute right decision. And I couldn't be more thrilled.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I think it's not for people with all white carpet and furniture.

ANASTASIYA KUKHTAREVA: This is awful true.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: All right. Thanks for sharing your story at home. Thanks for listening to the Informed Pregnancy podcast. Join us. Connect with us on Instagram at Dr. Berlin. It's D-O-C-T-O-R-B-E-R-L-I-N.

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