Jenna Ushkowitz - Before Birth

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IN THIS EPISODE

Jenna Ushkowitz — actress, singer, producer, author and podcaster — joins Dr. Elliot Berlin, DC just weeks before the birth of her first baby, who is breech. Jenna looks back on her early life as an adopted child brought from South Korea to Long Island at three months old, a childhood spent in commercials and on Sesame Street, her Broadway debut at nine in The King and I, and the road through Spring Awakening to Glee and beyond. She and Dr. Elliot Berlin, DC trade stories about live theater, improv and why stand-up comedy terrifies them both, then turn to how she met her husband David and how their own non-traditional family stories shape the way they are approaching parenthood. With her baby settled breech since mid-pregnancy, Jenna walks through everything she has tried to encourage her daughter to turn, the external cephalic version scheduled just days away, and how she is weighing a possible cesarean birth against the medicated vaginal birth she had imagined.

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DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: The informed pregnancy and parenting podcast. I'm your host pregnancy focused our prector dr Elliott Berlin my guest today is a very talented singer actress and fellow podcaster Who's been working since age? Three I have to tell my kids about this nearing the end of her first pregnancy Her baby's in a breach presentation and she is having to make the last-minute decisions Jenna uskowitz. Welcome to the podcast Thank you for having me. I love your musical voice

JENNA USHKOWITZ: Thank you for having me I think we should do the whole episode

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Just a long melodic podcast Yeah, okay. Where are you from?

JENNA USHKOWITZ: I grew up on Long Island in New York, but I was born in South Korea

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Okay born in South Korea and left South Korea at

JENNA USHKOWITZ: Age three months I was adopted and so my parents Brad and Judy Picked me up from the airport at JFK. I was brought over by some military guys who were coming back from Korea and Yeah, I grew up in Queens for a little bit and then we moved to Nassau County Long Island, you know anything about the first three months. I Don't I have a picture of my foster mom who took care of me in the I guess you'd call it an orphanage I hate that word, but you know someplace I was going through my transition Yeah, no, I don't know a ton, you know as I learned over the years about adoption in Korea Lots of things are made up. It was a very shameful Time to give up babies and also a culturally it's shameful

JENNA USHKOWITZ: So we don't know a lot about our past. I mean is it possible the person in the pictures not even your foster mom Well, no, I think that was actually from the adoption agency who sent that to my parents being like she's well taken care of She's coming. They got like some pictures over the three months time where they found out they were getting me Yeah, you know, what's better than offering a child like pre-adoption pit stop place or I

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I like the pit stop So your earliest memories are in

JENNA USHKOWITZ: Oh, yeah, for sure. I actually don't have a lot of really young childhood memories Some of my most profoundly childhood memories were started working So I worked very early on I was like the little kid who would go up to the tables at dinner and say hi To all the other families and they're like who's this cute little Asian girl? So my parents put me in modeling and acting and I did like probably 150 commercials from the time I was three until I was like 12 or 13 That's a prolific number of commercials. It was a lot. It was a lot of print jobs I did Sesame Street growing up we can talk about that and then I also like some of my best memories were from My debut on Broadway when I was nine

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Nine, okay. I mean at three like you couldn't have done a lot of training

JENNA USHKOWITZ: No, you're just cute and friendly and you smile real big and you know It's just having personality and not being scared of the camera and a lot of people with which then trains you to kind of be that people person and learn how to be on a set at a very young age.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And then at some point, is there formal training?

JENNA USHKOWITZ: Yeah, for sure. I think as I got a little bit older, obviously not three, probably around six, seven, you know, maybe even younger, I started dance class and singing lessons. And that's where I really found my love for theater. So I'm living in New York, obviously, like Broadway was the Mecca and, you know, I just fell in love. You know, most people do the pit stop of like community theater.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I, I went straight to Broadway because you already have your pit stop in Korea.

JENNA USHKOWITZ: Yes, that's right. In Korea and my non-arfinage and then, you know, straight to Broadway.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: What'd you do on Broadway?

JENNA USHKOWITZ: My first show was the King and I, the revival with Lou Diamond Phillips and Donna Murphy. I was nine. I was in fourth grade. I did go to school, but I just didn't go on Wednesdays. Well, so the rehearsal process is about six weeks. And legally the union has a tutor for you for that time. You go to school for like a couple of hours a day. But when I was doing the show, Long Island's like 45, 50 minutes out of the city. So my dad bought a mini van so that I could recline my seat in the back and go to sleep after the shows at night. King and I is notoriously long show. It's like two hours and 45 minutes. So I would probably get home around midnight. So I would sleep. He would carry me inside and then I'd go to school around nine a.m.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: The next day, I loved it.

JENNA USHKOWITZ: I loved it.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, so Wednesday, there's matinee.

JENNA USHKOWITZ: Yes. Wednesday is a matinee. So I would either go to school for like an hour and a half, or I would just get out of it completely and just not go. And my teachers were all like so thrilled that they had a student on Broadway that they were just so supportive and amazing. And we're fine with me missing school one day a week.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I know you're outgoing. I mean, now you've been through so much more, but walking out on Broadway stage with a theater packed with people. I mean, that seems intimidating to just about anybody.

JENNA USHKOWITZ: Yeah, you'd think so, but I think it's a kid. You have this like fearlessness, you know, like now it's much scarier to me than, you know, fourth grade. We were in like so much of the show as well. I don't think I thought about it. It was like extracurricular activities for me. I loved it. We got to wear these like ornate, beautiful costumes. And there was like 14 kids. So it wasn't like where you're the only kid around a ton of adults. Like we had like, you know, a huge family Broadway casts, you know, can range from four people to 60, but we had one of the largest cast on Broadway for a long time. We had like 55 people on that show. So it was a pretty crazy experience. Big cast, long show.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And then did you continue to do more theater?

JENNA USHKOWITZ: Yes, theater was certainly my track for many, many years following that. I fell in love with Broadway after the King and I, and I kind of took a break from the commercials and the, you know, all of that. And really went to school for a bit, but I went to Marymount Manhattan college in New York city. I studied theater and I have a minor in musical theater because at the time that school did not have a major in musical theater, but I just wanted to be in the city. Cause I was already had an agent and was auditioning and, you know, you go to school for these things to get an agent and to audition. So it was kind of backwards for me. Yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I was wondering, I mean, it's also like a down step almost here on Broadway and then you're doing college productions. Yeah.

JENNA USHKOWITZ: I went to performing arts high school as well. And, you know, honestly, being a kid on Broadway is much different than really honing in on your craft and the training. You were talking about, and I really had to make that transition and prove myself that I could be the cute kid on Broadway and then also really hold my own as an adult on Broadway. It's a very different experience. So, you know, I took the time in high school and college to really, you know, train and then six months out of college, I was bartending for quite a bit of time during college, and then I booked spring awakening on Broadway, which had just won the Tony awards. There was so much hype around it.

JENNA USHKOWITZ: I had seen it not in a million years that I ever think that I would be in that show six months later after seeing it, but I booked the show. I was only supposed to be there for like a couple of months because one of the other girls had to go finish high school, a young cast, and then they just kept me and I was able to stay for a little over a year with that show and that was like the big transition from, you know, kid actor to adult on Broadway. Hmm.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And then was theater like what you were aiming for?

JENNA USHKOWITZ: Or did you have, okay. So you were ahead of, yeah, all I wanted was Broadway. I thought I was going to be on Broadway for the rest of my life.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: It's just a crazy life though, isn't it?

JENNA USHKOWITZ: It is, but as a kid, like in New York city in your twenties, like you're willing to sacrifice your washer and your dryer and your four-floor walk-up. Like you're willing to sacrifice a lot and there was nothing I loved more. And there is still nothing I love more than live theater and you know, the instant gratification you get. I mean, you know, you studied it. And like, it's one of those things is that rush of adrenaline that you get, that you don't get when you do TV or film. I like to do comedy and-

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: See, that is really scary. That scares the crap out of me. Really? Dancing scares the crap out of me. Cause one time I lost a lot of weight and I was like, wow, I could see my feet. Maybe I should dance. So I went to do a hip hop class at the gym and I was like terrified. I never do any of those classes and they were giving us moves and I was doing the moves and I was just in a line of a bunch of people doing the moves and I was getting into it and I was feeling the rhythm. Like I never danced. It was probably the second time I ever moved my body to a rhythm. Were you scared? I was kind of nervous at the beginning but then I'm like, yeah, I got this. Like, I feel good. I move. And then we all whipped our heads around

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: and moved our bodies to the side. And that whole wall was mirror. And as soon as I saw myself in the mirror, I was like, that looks ridiculous. And then in comparison to all the other people on the line, I was like, whoa, one of these things is not like the others.

JENNA USHKOWITZ: You were having fun.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah. I was having fun until that moment. I didn't go back. In fact, I was so mortified by the whole thing. I just decided to gain all the weight back. So I never have to do it again. It's a good reason. It's a good reason.

JENNA USHKOWITZ: But I love comedy.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: The standup comedy though, is like the scariest thing to me in the whole world.

JENNA USHKOWITZ: Okay. But you're freaking hilarious.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: That's very nice of you. I don't know that I think that, but like-

JENNA USHKOWITZ: You're very funny and you're also very sharp with your observations. That's what makes good comedy. You're quick.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Fair enough. Fair enough. Fair enough. I know people who are much quicker.

JENNA USHKOWITZ: But you're also still that friendly, personable person. And you know, you can connect with the audience.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: That's very nice.

JENNA USHKOWITZ: Yeah. Maybe if we bring our show back, I'm going to twist your arm to go on stage and do a little set. Oh my God. You would literally have to give me 15 shots of tequila and blindfold me and then take the blindfold off. And that's how you would get me there.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: You know what? I love- 15 I'll just pass out.

JENNA USHKOWITZ: That's fine.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I love taking hilarious people who think that comedy is terrifying. And then you do it and you're like, oh my God, this is addictive. It's addictive. It's a drug. I don't know. Okay. But I went on Broadway to do comedy when I was 24 years old. I went to a show called Full Moon and they call people up on stage to do stuff. And my wife made such a loud noise when they were looking for a volunteer that I got plucked up on stage to do the scene. And it's hard to get into the mechanics of it, but they're kind of coaching you, but they don't talk. I didn't realize, nobody in the audience can hear that they're giving you direction. So I'm taking this direction. I'm doing it and I'm having great time.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And there's, I don't know, thousands of people there and they're just having a great time. They're laughing hysterically. It's the biggest drug in the world. So I could see why it's like, once you're really in that for reals and that's your thing and you're great at it, then I could see why you would want to do that forever.

JENNA USHKOWITZ: Yeah, I mean, I like improv. Like, who's line is it anyway? It was like one of my favorite shows. I enjoy that.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah, that's really good. Oh, so to start getting improv. Have you done improv classes?

JENNA USHKOWITZ: You know, in high school, we had improv shows every Friday night. So it was a good exercise. And it's one of the best skills that I've ever been able to have that early on in my career, because I mean, in auditions, all you're doing is improvising sometimes. They're just so off the cuff and sometimes you just have to go with it. So improv is such a great skill for every actor, I think.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah. Okay, amazing. How'd you get from a segue from live to screen?

JENNA USHKOWITZ: Yeah, so right out of Spring Awakening, actually, while I was still in the show, the same casting director was casting the show called Glee. And none of us had really heard about it, but the roles for the pilot were so kind of ambiguous and could have been anybody really. So we all auditioned for it. Out of New York, but we knew it was shooting in LA. And I went in and set my tape in and kind of messed up a little. And the role that I played on Glee, her name was Tina Cohen, I think at the time, or Tina C, had no lines because she had a stutter in the pilot and she had Tourette's in the pilot. That got cut before it aired. But the only line I had to audition with was, that was it.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: That was it?

JENNA USHKOWITZ: That was the show. I don't know.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: But come on, that takes talent.

JENNA USHKOWITZ: I mean. Well, here's the thing. The callback was I met Ryan Murphy, the creator of the show, and he came to New York and met a couple of us. And he said, there's no real lines that Tina has. We don't really know who she is yet in this show. So would you improv something about her? And I was like, here we go, I got this. And I had already prepped kind of like what I would say and had some character background on who she was. And I had said like, my mom thinks that Glee Club will be good for my stutter and good for me to make friends. And he's like, I love how you made her so positive. And there was a couple of other auditions after that. We had to sing and kind of go through the ringer. But other than that, it was a pretty easy process

JENNA USHKOWITZ: and nobody knew how big the show would be. So we were excited. I was excited to get a new job on TV in LA, but nobody could have foreseen what was coming.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: After you went through the singer ringer, was the experience of camera work, like how was it in contrast to theater?

JENNA USHKOWITZ: Yeah, it was definitely a lonely experience for me. I had done very minimal, like real TV work. I had hosted a show for the Yes Network for the Yankees back in the day when I was in college in New York. But that was like kind of the extent of my work in Sesame Street, which I was a child. So there was a lot of learning, even when you hit your mark on camera, when you're looking at somebody else, they get your profile. That's the intention. And the camera has it on you. I would cheat out because in theater, you learn to cheat out and show your face. And the actor, Matt Morrison, who was also a theater actor, like whispered and he said, Jenna, you don't have to cheat out. So it was like just true theater. You get me kind of coming out

JENNA USHKOWITZ: and learning all of these new technical terms and just really showing up and knowing your lines and hitting your marks and all these crazy things that happen on TV.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Now that you've got both under your belt, do you have a preference?

JENNA USHKOWITZ: Gosh, there's something about live theater emotionally that I just feel like is home for me. And I love that rush. And I love telling the same story a different way every night. TV, I love that there's something different about it every week. And your character develops and sometimes you don't know how that's gonna happen. So there's always these surprises. And obviously the lifestyle of TV is just a bit more manageable than Broadway at times. Although both are quite difficult, I will say. Yeah, it's not just driving to work.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: No. Okay, before we take a quick break, theater question, have you had a major blooper during a live show?

JENNA USHKOWITZ: Millions. Yeah. So one of them was there's this charity event that they do on Broadway a couple of times a year called the 24 hour plays. And in 24 hours, all these Broadway actors, writers come together, you pick people out of a hat, you get your cast, which is like three to four people and you get a writer who is going to write you a skit for the next day. So they stay up all night and they write a skit meant for those three specific cast members or four cast members. We show up at 7 a.m. the actors, we rehearse all day, we block it, we get a quick rehearsal on the stage. And then by seven o'clock on a Broadway stage, you were performing like a 12 page script.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Wow, that sounds like a lot of pressure.

JENNA USHKOWITZ: It's just terrifying. It feels like standup comedy to me. I never said yes after this again. I was like, I've never done this again. I was with Rachel Dratch and a bunch of other really amazing Tracy Toms, amazing actors. And my big part was at the end of the 12 pages, not the beginning of the 12 pages. So we never really got to it to rehearse a lot. So my part was at the end of the 12 pages. So we just kept getting distracted and we'd start rehearsing the first six and then you'd get to page seven and somebody would come and you'd have to do something or try your costume on or something crazy like that. So by the time we got to seven o'clock and the show was happening, we're performing, it's going well, everybody's doing okay.

JENNA USHKOWITZ: You get to page eight, nine when my stuff really comes in and I get to page 11 or 12, like just the very end of the skit. And all of a sudden I'm like, oh, I don't remember what happened. I actually don't remember anything. I lost where I was. They call it when you enter the white room. Nothing exists except for the white room and there's no getting out. So I'm supposed to exit at some point after this big rant. I don't remember the rant. So I just look at Rachel and Tracy and I'm like, I'm leaving and I just leave. I just leave. I leave the stage. stage, I left them, they took it off of me. And they come off stage and like, what happened? I'm like, I couldn't tell you. I really couldn't tell you. It was one of the most mortifying

JENNA USHKOWITZ: experiences, but also like, you know, we had a couple of hours to rehearse. So it will haunt me forever. But also, I just have to give myself a little bit of a break. Yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I mean, at least it wasn't one of your productions.

JENNA USHKOWITZ: There's stuff that's happened on those stages too, but not

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: as bad as that. It would be rough if all 50 people in the kingdom had a bad night. That's probably happened, I'm sure. It's not a wider room in the world. Truly. All right. Let's take a quick break. When we come back, we're gonna find out more about this pregnancy situation. We'll be right back. Welcome back. We're talking about Jenna. Okay, we're talking really to two people, you and a little one growing inside you. That's right. She's pretty cooked.

JENNA USHKOWITZ: She's almost ready to pop out. Where did you meet your partner? My husband, David, I met on a dating app. I met on hinge on hinge. And you told me what was called hinge. I mean, it's still called hinge, but it's not in G anymore. Yeah, it's like supposed to open a door. It's supposed to be like a door opener, I guess.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: It opened the door for you.

JENNA USHKOWITZ: It absolutely did. He was my first date on hinge.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: What did you guys do on your first date?

JENNA USHKOWITZ: We went to a restaurant called Evilly in West Hollywood. We bonded over food very quickly and early on in our conversations on hinge. And we went to Evilly and then we went to Bar Lubech, which is down the way. And then we walked past Laurel hardware in West Hollywood as well. And then we went home separate homes.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yes. Wow. So some eating some drinking and some home repairs.

JENNA USHKOWITZ: Yes. Laurel hardware was a hardware store. Now earned restaurant.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Gotcha. Okay. And then how soon from there to you're like, I think this might be it.

JENNA USHKOWITZ: Very quickly. I had moved back to LA from New York. I had done waitress on Broadway. And then in 2018, I moved back and I was like, I'm going to meet my husband in Los Angeles. I'm going home. I'm going to move back. I'm going to meet my husband. Literally, I said that. And then a month later, I met David and right off the bat. I knew right off the bat. Like we had probably seen each other every three days after that. And the rest is history.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Wow. I mean, other days. Did it move on from food was food and the mainstay for a little while. The bonding point.

JENNA USHKOWITZ: I mean, everything was the bonding point, honestly. We're so similar and yet quite different, but you know, our love of music, our love of TV, our love of travel, we just have very similar tastes in a lot of things and we love good restaurants. We like the blind. One of our first trips away was to Napa to go wine tasting. It was a great trip. We call it Napa one-on-one. Yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: So you guys bonded.

JENNA USHKOWITZ: Yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Over wine and lots of other things.

JENNA USHKOWITZ: Yes.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I was wondering with all your wine tastings. I mean, I don't know anything about wine, but I see on TV, they drink it like mouthwash and then spit it out.

JENNA USHKOWITZ: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah. No, we drink the whole thing.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, okay. Good. That kind of wine tasting couple.

JENNA USHKOWITZ: Only if it's not worth it. Yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Similarities in your backgrounds.

JENNA USHKOWITZ: You know, it's funny. He's from LA. He's not in acting. He works a real job. He's a real person, but we did bond over our family experience. You know, he grew up with just his mom and his dad wasn't really in the picture. So we both are very passionate about our chosen families and bringing people into your life, you know, and in other ways and non-traditional ways. So we absolutely kind of felt like there was an immediate bond there. We talked about our first date. It was like a very vulnerable and intimate first date where we really talked about a lot, but yeah, you know, we, he went to school on the East coast. So we had both spent some time in New York city. He has family on Long Island. So that worked out really well.

JENNA USHKOWITZ: So we definitely had a lot of things to bond over. I mean, he plays five instruments. He plays more instruments than me and I do this for a living and he sings and people are always like, do you guys sing together? And I'm like, no, no separate showers. No separate showers, separate beds, separate showers. I'm just kidding. We know I like to sing and dance, but I do it for a living. And like, he does it for leisure on the weekends. So it's not something that I recreationally like to do. We listen to music together, but we don't play a lot of music together. Yeah. When I come home, I just don't go around cracking things.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: You're like, come here, kid. You're back. Hey, my dog, Jake, Jakey. Okay. So now you're having a kid. Having a kid is a baby. Oh, maybe I'll get you on stage to a comedy and I'll do a little duet with him, but as long as I don't have to dance. So I wonder this with your interesting familial backgrounds, does now having a child, does that bring anything up for either one of you or is it, would you say difference in the experience for you versus other people?

JENNA USHKOWITZ: You know, it's funny before we got pregnant, we would always say like, if we're lucky enough, because, you know, you just never know how fertility is going to go. And, you know, obviously like adopting a child would have been on the table, but it was really important to me that I wanted to try and carry and, you know, have a kid of our own. And, you know, for him, I think his dad not being around and his mom, you know, kind of raising him on his own. He is a real respect and appreciation for a single mom. So he's going to make me a single, I'm kidding. No, he really wants to be a dad who is very involved and very around. And I really appreciate that. And I can already like, you know, see and feel that. So that's really great.

JENNA USHKOWITZ: And for me, you know, it's interesting because I didn't do a biological search. I don't really have a ton of interest in doing that. So it's interesting to think about, you know, as my

daughter gets older and questions her past and her heritage and where she's from, like, will she be interested in my past and will she be interested in that search? And, you know, I find that really interesting because that's her prerogative. It's not something I chose to do, but she has every right and probably much more facility by the time she's older to be able to do that. So that's exciting.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: You know, did you ever consider trying to find your foster mom

JENNA USHKOWITZ: since you have a picture? You know, it's like the one thing I did think about because we were going to go to Korea in 2020 as like my first trip back and obviously back at poo pooed. Um, but we were really excited about it. And, you know, as much as I didn't want to do the birth search, I was interested in a lot of people do the search and find their foster moms. And a lot of the foster moms will remember you as a baby and remember taking care of you. They don't forget, you know, those babies they took care of. So it's something I would consider. Yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: If she's still around, give me the picture. I'll take care of it. How was pregnancy for you?

JENNA USHKOWITZ: Pregnancy has been amazing. I won't know that I'd say I'd love to be pregnant all the time, but it's been really great. I've been very lucky. I did not get sick. I worked through my like 11th or 12th week of pregnancy early on. It was kind of nice. Yeah. I was doing a show. I can't talk about it yet because it's not out, but I was doing a show and it was actually, I was like scared because I wasn't sure if I was going to get sick or not. But I was also really grateful that I wasn't sitting on my couch, hoping that this pregnancy sticks and worried about all the things that people worry about in their first trimester. So it was a really good distraction for me and I wasn't sick. Thank goodness.

JENNA USHKOWITZ: So I was able to really manage and I, I was like able to stay active my whole pregnancy, which could be why this little girl is breach.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Um, you certainly can't take it on any one thing, but what kind of activities were you doing?

JENNA USHKOWITZ: Well, I have a mini trampoline that I work out on and it's like dancing. You'd hate it. It's a little combinations that get built over a half hour or 40 minute class. I'm incredibly high cardio, but it's low impact. It's amazing. I love it. I post a lot of my little routines on Tik TOK and on Instagram. And I was able to bounce up until probably about eight months, people were very concerned for me. No, there's a company that actually does it, a fitness brand called the nest that I do live classes on zoom with Mondays and Fridays. And they have a digital platform as well that they created during COVID. So I can just go and click into one of the classes and they lead you through for a half hour.

JENNA USHKOWITZ: So I was able to keep up with those and it just kept me in such good shape.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Do they have any that involve sofa? So now you're going to lay down on a sofa and bounce.

JENNA USHKOWITZ: No, just like lift my head, put my head back down, lift my arm, put my arm back down.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I don't know. I went more. My speed. Yes, a slow bounce.

JENNA USHKOWITZ: That's what we call it. Now the only thing I'm bouncing on is a yoga ball, but yeah, so I do that and toning and sculpting. I do that and toning and sculpting.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Whatever. Okay. So couch surfing, that's me. What was your plan for birth?

JENNA USHKOWITZ: My plan for birth was I was hoping for a medicated vaginal birth. I was hoping for a walking epidural, but right now because of COVID, my doctor informed me that there is no tubes for the walking epidural. So my hospital is not offering that, unfortunately. Yeah, but things are changing anyway. So now shifting to a potential C-section. My baby is breach. She has not moved since like 22 weeks. She is still in the same spot. It's confirmed. And I have an ECV schedule for four days from now, which I am not sure that I am going to do.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I have a question for you. Do people have a hard time spelling it?

JENNA USHKOWITZ: They have a hard time pronouncing it and they have a hard time spelling it. Yes. Which is why I'm so glad that I married somebody with a great last name. It's partially why I married him. Stanley. Yeah, my new last name, but I don't even tell people now when they say like, what's your last name, you know, for, I don't know, an appointment or something. I just spell it for them immediately. I don't even know. You don't even say it. You just, yeah. No, no, because then there's 15 letters that don't belong in the name.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Right. And then are they like, can I buy a vowel? What's the background of the name?

JENNA USHKOWITZ: My dad is Sicilian and Russian. So it's Russian.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, so they're just smushed it together and made a Sicilian version. It's a pizza, pierogi.

JENNA USHKOWITZ: He thought it was Polish for a really long time. And yeah, pierogi sounds really good right now. He thought it was Polish for a really long time. And then he met a distant cousin who was like, no, it's actually Russian, but his mother, my grandma was Sicilian and his dad passed away when he was a bit younger. So he was brought up Sicilian and Catholic. So everybody thought that Jenna Ashkowitz was the Asian Jew. And if my manager growing up, my kid manager used to send me masa and we never told him because I love masa and he sent chocolate covered masa. So he just never told them that I wasn't the wish.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah. The only time I ask this is right. We'll take a quick break and we'll be right back with Jenna. I score come back. We're talking to a very, very pregnant Jenna. I scored Stanley. So if you have a boy, would it be Stanley Stanley? It's a possibility, right?

JENNA USHKOWITZ: You know, I have a friend who was like, I think I'm going to name my boy Stanley and she's having a girl, so, oh, so could be either way. You could be the girl. Yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: But you would never want to name a kid. I scored the scores Lord. No, I don't hate my children that much. My unborn children. OK, so you're towards the end. Four days from now you have an external cephalic version. Let's go back just a tiny bit. At what point in your pregnancy did you find out the baby was not head down?

JENNA USHKOWITZ: The baby was not head down. Probably around, I want to say 24, 26 weeks was when she hadn't turned yet. And, you know, they're like personal time. You've got time. Twenty eight weeks was the big one. They're like, when you come back in four weeks for your 32 week, we'd like to see her, you know, have turned by that point. So, like, you know, I had looked on spinning babies a little bit and, you know, done some of those exercises. But it wasn't really a there was still time. Like she instinctually was just going to turn. That's kind of what I had heard. So when I went back in my 32 week and I found out that she still hadn't turned, that's when my doctor, you know, brought up the cesarean birth and she brought up the ECV option.

JENNA USHKOWITZ: And, you know, this really starting with the spinning babies. And when I hit 34 weeks was really when I was like talking to people about ECVs and like, go see Dr. Berlin first, first of all. Yep. She told me you turn babies and, you know, it wasn't until that time that it started to get like the pressure started to kind of hit me that I was like, oh crap, like this is a thing. And she's really breach.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Even when you were expecting to have, I mean, you wanted a slightly more natural medicated hospital birth, meaning you wanted the walking epidural so that it wouldn't be entirely numb or stuck in your bed or, you know, other interventions that follow just because you have a complete epidural. But now this is obviously a much more intermitted birth, but did you give any thought to a cesarean anyway, just because let's say a third of babies are born that way. Even if they start off on a virtual birthday, often kind of end up in a cesarean anyway. Did you give some?

JENNA USHKOWITZ: No, I didn't think that cesarean was really going to be an option for me. I knew that birth plans change. That's why, you know, a million things change. But I never thought that the cesarean would be the way that my baby was going to be born. And that's OK, like I very quickly pivoted to understanding that like this was a real option and it's still a birth. So I wasn't really ever married to one plan, but I also just never thought like that was like my journey doing a C section. I took a class, though, like a birthing class. And we did go through the whole C section segment. And this was before I had really understood that she was like not turning. And I listened pretty intently because I was like, OK,

JENNA USHKOWITZ: this could happen and you should pay attention to more prepared for.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah, yeah. What kind of things have you done to try to give the baby a better opportunity for going head down?

JENNA USHKOWITZ: What have I not tried? OK, it's really the question. I've done moxibustion twice, which is the acupuncture where they put the is it moxie? Is that what it's called? Moxibustion, yeah, moxibustion at my toe. The herb is mugwort.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Interesting. Sounds like a Harry Potter potion. Muggle work.

JENNA USHKOWITZ: I have swam in a pool. I have done headstands. I have done forward flips. I swam. I have done the inversions off the couch, the spinning babies, magical three, whatever you call it. I have sat on a yoga ball. I've done the right angle because I used to do a lot of yoga. So I did a right angle handstand. I've seen you for public massages and loosening up my ligaments and chiropractic work. Yeah, I play music down low. I've flashed my flashlight down low to see if she moved towards the light. I mean, honestly, it's a wild experience. All the people who suggest all the things that worked for them.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah. I mean, that's significantly more activity than I even had on my twenty twenty two New Year's resolution. And you did it all in three weeks. If you met me, you'd know that's like this. Nothing. That's your pre-breakfast warm up. Okay. So you're facing an external cephalic version in ECV where you go to the hospital, they give you some drug usually to relax your uterus and they manually try through your belly to avert the baby from not head down to head down. What could possibly go wrong?

JENNA USHKOWITZ: It could possibly go wrong, Dr. Berlin. Yeah, I'm on the fence about it, honestly. And over the next four days, I'm really going to try and shut out the noise because everybody has an opinion about everything we know in pregnancy, parenting advice. It's just wild. And I know it comes from a really good place, but I just need to make sure that the choice I'm making is for me and not in response to somebody else. And that's really hard. Like in pregnancy, I feel like I was constantly mist-busting and drowning out the noise. And, you know, my concerns are I have an interior placenta and I don't know if that creates any higher of a risk, but my placenta is in the front. I am concerned about the

JENNA USHKOWITZ: Although I do have a pretty high pain threshold and most importantly, I'm just obviously concerned that like, I don't know, it sounds a little woo woo, but like that I'm willing her to do something that she doesn't want to do. That's my instinct, but I'm leaning towards because my doctor recommends it and it's been done many, many times. I find it hard to find a lot of people who have done it and the success rate is quite low 50, 60%, I guess, 50% of people who do it. And that you just don't find a lot of people who have good success stories and who talk about it a lot. And, you know, I've heard the words painful, traumatic, scary, you know, all these bad words kind

JENNA USHKOWITZ: of surrounding this, that that's why I'm trying to drown out the noise because ultimately I know like no decision is wrong. It's just what I choose.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah, all of those descriptors that you use remind me back to that hip hop class that I tried.

JENNA USHKOWITZ: I mean, I'm basically going in in four days for stand up comedy. Yeah, I mean, the good news about anything that goes wrong in my life is that tragedy plus times post comedy. So when I was sort of dying from COVID, I was like, if I make it, I'm going to have a good set. Yeah. This is my set.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah, there you go. I was like, Oh, I'm getting better already. All right. So, I mean, you know, we're going to keep doing our jam. It could be that you'll decide to do these and if

you do it may or may not work. You know, I've shared my thoughts about it with you. And not only is there no wrong choice, I think that you're looking at a bunch of great choices instead of like, which is the good choice and the bad choice. It's just which one has more personal pros and cons. Right. And what sort of risks or downsides are you willing to take for what sort of upsides and it's tough to make that choice. You know, if we had a crystal ball, then we'd be like, Oh yeah, definitely I'm

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: going to do that. Or heck no, I'm not going to do that. But we don't. So you kind of

JENNA USHKOWITZ: have to go with your gut. Right. And there's just no clear path for me because I'm not somebody who had felt so passionate about my birth plan. I wasn't planning a home birth. I wasn't planning an unmedicated birth. I wasn't even that passionate about having a vaginal birth. I honestly just, I want her here safely and I can't wait to meet her. But, you know, I wanted to know that I was trying to do everything I could for the plan that I had initially had in my mind and my instinct and my what I initially wanted. But if that's not her journey and our journey, like, you know, I'm excited for the C-section when they hold her up like Simba and like, I get to meet her. That's the way it's going to be.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I love that at the moment. Again, like these are the options. Don't know where we're going to head, but you're good with whatever path it ends up being to you holding this wonderful little baby in your arms. And that's really cool. Have you done things to prepare for motherhood like after baby arrives?

JENNA USHKOWITZ: I mean, as much as you can do, I was currently renovating my house. So one day I'm going to tell my baby the tale of how I went through renovations in the last six months of my pregnancy. It's all good.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Great. You have most of them. It's a supply chain. You're missing an oven and we don't have the catheter for the walking epidural. Apparently no baby formula on the shelves. Oh my goodness. I just hope they have a scalpel if you need one. They probably do. They probably do. She's just going to use her hand. It's fine.

JENNA USHKOWITZ: Well, Costco has those heavy duty plastic knives.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh my, just a pie knife.

JENNA USHKOWITZ: Todd, I'm as prepared as I'll ever be. You know, I did all the things, her nursery is ready. I hired a postpartum doula because my family is in New York and partially because I just want to hire somebody that I could boss around. So, I just have seen so many friends who are moms who talk about the fourth trimester, who talk about postpartum, who aren't afraid to talk about it, which I feel like it is more widely known about going into pregnancy and birth now. But I'm grateful to have a postpartum doula that really specializes in does this for a living and knows what to look for and knows how to take care of mom and baby and just setting you up for success to heal and bond. And, you know, those are the most crucial things that we can do.

JENNA USHKOWITZ: So yeah, we hired some help, which was really high on my list. And, you know, all the other normal things, I guess you do, and you nest and get ready for baby. Yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I mean, it's coming very, very soon.

JENNA USHKOWITZ: It is.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I mean, it's fair game. I say any day now, she's like, get me out of here. I think also like whichever way the baby comes, the lifelong activity, being an active person, taking care of yourself, keeping, you know, healthy cardiovascular, healthy weight and eating. Well, I think you just recover so much faster from either, from either birth. I had a patient who was literally hiking within two weeks of having her C-section with their first baby, not necessarily recommended, but I couldn't believe she came in seven, eight days after her C-section birth. And she just was energized walking with general ease and just bouncing back. So, you know, I think generally people say a great vaginal birth is typically

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: going to be better than a great cesarean birth, but you can't really know if it's going to be great on either side. And I've seen people have very easy recoveries from both and somewhat challenging recoveries from both. So it's a path and I am grateful that you came to share this part of your story when I look forward very much to seeing how this story ends.

JENNA USHKOWITZ: Oh, thank you. Me too.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And I'll be in your pocket the entire time. If you need anything.

JENNA USHKOWITZ: Oh, thanks.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Uh, Jenna, I don't want to take you away. You probably have a few more exercises to do before bedtime. Where can we find you online?

JENNA USHKOWITZ: Um, Jenna, ushbowitz, U S H K O W I T Z on Instagram, on tick-tock on Twitter. It's just the same. Jenna ushbowitz.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, it wasn't taken.

JENNA USHKOWITZ: Don't make me laugh. I'm going to pee.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, sorry.

JENNA USHKOWITZ: No, it wasn't. Thank goodness. Because that's like when I get my Gmail, like you were like ushbowitz taken. What other family member took it? I gotta go find my cousins.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: My dad, he took it. All right. So we'll find you a Jenna ushbowitz online. And we're also there on Instagram at Dr. Berlin D O C G O R B E R L I N happy labor day. Next time we talk to you, you'll be holding your kid in your arms.

JENNA USHKOWITZ: Oh, hooray.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I hope you have an amazing birth.

JENNA USHKOWITZ: Thank you.

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