Kathrin Zenkina - After Birth

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IN THIS EPISODE

Kathrin Zenkina — personal development coach and the voice behind Manifestation Babe — returns to the podcast to tell the after-birth half of her story with Dr. Elliot Berlin, DC. When she was last here she was very pregnant, nesting hard, and planning to give birth at home in her apartment, with labour starting naturally and her husband Brennan, her doula Lori, and her midwife Abby around her. She also had visions of how the birth would unfold — flashes she dismissed at the time as fears, because that was not what she wanted. Days past 40 weeks, after ten days of on-again, off-again pre-labour signs, the contractions finally become the real thing — then pause completely the moment Dr. Rad walks in to check her fluid levels, and come roaring back the moment he leaves. Kathrin finds sweet, sweet relief in a shower whose hot water never runs cold, marries a pair of cheap plastic combs she digs into her palms to redirect each sensation, and processes far more than pain in that shower, from her mother's Soviet-era hospital birth to women labouring without a loving space. But progress is slow, the baby stays stubbornly high in her ribs, and every plan she made meets the unpredictability of a marathon labour — leaving her, her team, and the listener at a crossroads: keep going at this pace at home, try to move things along, or change the plan altogether?

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DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Welcome to the informed parenting and pregnancy podcast. I'm your host pregnancy focus car protector. Dr. Elliot Berlin today You're tuning into the after story from my guest who was a personal development coach and she was here last very pregnant and Expecting her first baby Congratulations. You are now a mama Catherine's and Kina. Welcome to the podcast. Thank you

KATHRIN ZENKINA: I'm so excited to be back and excited to not be pregnant anymore We're just I can finally hold my bladder. It's amazing. Like I don't have to pee every two seconds

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I forgot what that was like. Wow. What do you do with your free time? I

KATHRIN ZENKINA: Mean, I got a whole baby to take care of so thankfully I do have something to occupy my time now

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Great last time I talked to you. First of all, you inspired me There's so many interesting things about your background that needed to be overcome and not only did you overcome and you blasted them with the most powerful lasers ever and you know Excelled yourself forward into a place where normally are you thriving but you help other people thrive and then you went and had This kid you're pregnant and you had visions of having a baby. You knew you were having a boy

KATHRIN ZENKINA: Yeah, and I'm a spoiler alert that came true and it's so interesting because I had visions of how my birth actually Ended up that I thought were just Flashes of like my fears and things like that like things that's like that's not gonna happen That's not what I want. And yet that is what ended up happening. So it's very interesting. I'm excited to share the story

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Okay, I can't wait. You told me a third trimester felt like it was lasting forever The baby I know for a fact was pushing deep into your ribs. I don't even know how you could

KATHRIN ZENKINA: God and that is a big part of the birth story too. Oh really? Yeah, it's all coming together

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I'm glad we did that before I know I know and you were nesting like crazy All right Your plan was to give birth at home in your apartment and you wanted labor to start naturally

KATHRIN ZENKINA: How did things go from that point? Yeah, I think it was maybe two days after our pod Actually the next day because the next day was 39 weeks. I started to see signs of the pre labor coming in I think the first one was like a little bit of bleeding like I woke up to some spotting and then I Noticed the Braxton Hicks started to get more frequent not more intense But more frequent to the point where I felt like I was having them a minute apart like all night long But they were never intense. I never saw it as like this is labor Thankfully my midwife and doula they have coached me so much about like what? Labor actually is versus what that like pre labor leading up to labor is like

KATHRIN ZENKINA: So I was like under no circumstances and my texting them calling them like I know this is not legit I mean, it's legit But it's not like the real actual thing where they have to come over and help me with this and it was never Something that I had to breathe really through it was just like whoa My stomach keeps tightening over and over and over again. I remember the day I actually went into labor. It was 40 weeks plus three and So that was like a combination of ten days of this like, okay Is it happening is it not happening and my midwife and doula and every intuitive in my life We're like no, you're not giving birth until August 10th 11th We definitely see 10th or 11th and this is now August 4th

KATHRIN ZENKINA: The day when I started experiencing like what I thought was my water leaking. Now I didn't want my water to leak because I was GBS positive. And I didn't want to start that process of like, oh crap, we need antibiotics or whatever it was. And I think I chose not to do antibiotics unless something happened to where my water is broken for a really long time or whatever. We just kind of like wanted to wait and see. And I was like, dang it. And so I started the process of like checking like the pH of the fluid. Is it this? Is it that? And I remember my midwife was like, I think it might be a high

leak just because it's so minimal and it just is like not really like gushing out or anything like that.

KATHRIN ZENKINA: Let's have Dr. Rad, Dr. C. Rad, who's done my ultrasounds throughout my pregnancy because I had a midwife who doesn't do ultrasounds. So she would send me to her favorite doctor to go get ultrasounds out because his tech is amazing. He's like a high risk pregnancy doctor. I'm not high risk, but she loves sending people to him because his machinery is incredible. He's just like, the pictures are so clear. Everyone's like, how do you get such clear ultrasound pictures? And I'm like Dr. Rad. So she wanted Dr. Rad to look at my fluid levels, determine if it was a high leak and also it was time to do the non-stress test. And of course, you know, being 40 plus three, I was like, I don't feel like going anywhere. Like, can he come over to me?

KATHRIN ZENKINA: And my midwife is like, yeah, I think like his after hours or his house call is the same price. And I'm like, perfect. Have him come over. And so he came over that night, August 4th. And I want to say about an hour before he arrived, I started to have like what I would read about, you know, what is a contraction actually like the labor contraction, which is it's like Braxton Hicks tightening plus a period cramp. And so that's where the pain part comes from. The contraction is like the discomfort and then the period cramp sensation itself is the quote unquote labor pain. So I was like, this is very interesting and actually really quick. I was feeling the period cramp sensation that week as well, but it never accompanied a Braxton Hick.

KATHRIN ZENKINA: It was just like constant, just dull cramping. So I was like, this is very interesting. I'm getting like half of a contraction here and there. And I'm like, okay, whatever. I feel like things are starting to kick up. So about an hour before I'm like, oh my God, I have to actually breathe through some of these. And then Dr. Rad walks into my house to do like the non-stress test and ultrasound. And he was also curious about like, let's just look at the baby and whatever. Why not have an ultrasound? And so I was on my couch, literally where I'm recording this right now, and he comes in and everything just stops. Like there is no more contractions. Every sign of labor is like all of a sudden gone because I'm distracted by Dr.

KATHRIN ZENKINA: Rad. And I'm just distracted by the whole process. And I remember reading about how, like, if there's a new variable introduced to labor, it can pause, right? If there's like, you know, a threat or something or a new energy that comes in, it can change the frequency of contractions. It can stop them, blah, blah, blah. So I'm like, this is interesting. I don't know if that was just like more pre-labor or Dr. Rad was distracting me. And so he was doing the ultrasound. He's like, I don't think you're in labor because you have so much fluid. The baby is still so high up and, you know, he's in my ribs. He's still so high up. I think like it's going to come on in the next couple of days to a week.

KATHRIN ZENKINA: And I'm like, OK, that's pretty much in line with what people are saying. All right. That's great. The moment the door shuts, boom, it comes back on again. And all of a sudden, I am having like a harder and harder time with them. They're coming on a little strong. And I'm like, OK, just because he determined whether there was a leak or not. He said there's still so much fluid, like if there was, it's very, very minimal. It's not like a huge sign of the water is broken. Like, you're fine. Like, it's not a big risk to being GBS positive. Like, if there is a leak, it's so high up and so minimal. Like, there's nothing touching the baby right now. And I'm like, OK, perfect. And he leaves and like,

boom, all of a sudden we start timing them.

KATHRIN ZENKINA: And they're like four and three minutes apart. And so I'm like there for maybe an hour. So for one hour, nothing, really. Nothing. Yeah. And then before, yes. And then as soon as he leaves and right before, they were like seven, eight minutes apart. So all of a sudden, it's like three, four minutes apart for a minute long. And we waited for it to get to that like hour because like you're looking for the five one one. Right. And this is like three, four one one for me. And let's let's just explain what that means. So five one one is something my doula taught me where you're having contractions at least every five minutes apart or less for one minute duration, each of them for a full hour. So you're timing them over a full hour.

KATHRIN ZENKINA: They're a minute long or less, five minutes or less apart. So that's considered labor. So we got to that point. And all of a sudden, I'm like, a shower sounds nice right now. So I go into the shower and the sweet, sweet relief. that a shower provides. And this is a huge part of my birth story because that shower and the water heater in my building is incredible. The water never goes cold ever. So it's like hot, hot water feels so good and I can handle them so much easier. And I'm like, Oh, this is perfect. I'm just going to be in here for a little while. But then all of a sudden I notice I'm getting vocal with these contractions and I'm like, Oh my God, am I going to have one of

KATHRIN ZENKINA: those like three hour labor stories or like, you know, first time moms I know are notorious for going 24 hours plus in many cases, am I going to be one of those fast labors? And my mom also told me, she's like, I have a feeling your labor is going to be really fast. So I'm like, Oh my God, it's like literally happening. So my husband, finally I'm like, call Lori. So he calls my doula and my doula is like, okay, put the phone in the shower so I can listen to her while you like do whatever. So she's listening to me and she's like, okay, I'm heading over. I'll be there in about an hour because she lives all the way in Malibu and we're all the way in Beverly Hills. So it's going to take some time. And she set an hour to be safe.

KATHRIN ZENKINA: So she's like, I'll be there in an hour and an hour goes by and I'm still in the shower. And Lori walks in and she comes into the shower and she starts talking to me and just kind of like assessing the situation. And she's like, okay, Catherine, oh, she starts timing them herself. And she's like, okay, Catherine, we're still very early. And in my head, I'm like, are you sure? Are you sure we're early? And she's like, we're very early. So I'm going to put you guys to bed and I'm going to teach you how to breathe through these. So they become so manageable that you're able to sleep in between contractions or maybe even sleep through them. And I'm like, okay, that sounds nice. And she really

KATHRIN ZENKINA: did like what she did. She put like a heating pad around my belly so I can keep getting the sensation of like that hot water, just the heat. So good. It felt so good. They really do say it's second to an epidural and I would agree. It's like the best thing you can have at home. That's like not necessarily an epidural. And so we're in bed and I remember like actually being able to sleep in between some of the contractions because the time went by pretty quickly. And I remember going to the bathroom because of course I have to pee every six minutes. Anyway, I remember going to the bathroom and Lori was asleep on my couch inside my nursery. I have like this big, I turned my bedroom that has a den attached

KATHRIN ZENKINA: to the bedroom. So it's like this huge room and essentially it was wasted space for so long. And we turned like the big portion to be like the postpartum suite. There's like a couch in there, nursing chair, everything required for a nursery. And then we have our bed in the den portion. And then we have a bathroom in there. So it's just like a world that you can like live in. And she was sleeping on the couch and I was like, oh good. She stayed like, that's funny. She's like sleeping right there. And I think she did a birth the night before. And I remember when I started to get those gushes, like small little gushes of fluid, I went on Instagram and I saw that my birth team, my midwife Dula and my photographer were actually

KATHRIN ZENKINA: at a birth. They were just finishing a birth. And I was jokingly going to text and be like, are you guys down for another? Because I think I'm going into labor. And I was like, no, no, don't do that. Like let them go to sleep, let them get rest, like them not think about me so that they can properly attend to my birth if I do go into labor. So it's funny because she literally was at a birth the night before. Now she's sleeping on my couch. And the morning comes around and things are progressing. They're getting more intense. And just like, I think so, like a tiny bit, I was in and out, in and out, in and out. And morning comes around, I think it's like six in the morning, seven in the morning.

KATHRIN ZENKINA: And Laurie looks at me and she's like, um, I think we should distract you. Um, let's go on a walk. I know you probably are going to hate me for it. It's not going to feel the best when you're starting the process of going on a walk. But once you're out there, you're going to be able to walk through these contractions and we're just going to get some fresh air and sunshine. It's going to feel nice. And I'm like, I want to go to the shower. Like a walk is the furthest thing that I want to do. Can I tell you something right now?

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah, what? First of all, I am very impressed because I listened to a lot of birth stories and they're all fascinating and interesting to me. But the level of detail that you remember, maybe it gets fuzzier later. I don't know, but the level of detail is kind of amazing. But also your storytelling is also pretty amazing because I don't know. I deliberately didn't talk to you before the podcast. I have no idea how your birth went from this point forward. And the way you're setting it, I still don't have a clue if you're going to give birth in 10 minutes or 10 days, nothing. But in either case, I guess we should take a break. We'll be right back. we're talking to manifestation babe katherines and kina about her birth story and i'm in total

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: suspense uh six o'clock in the morning things have been going on for a long time now on a small scale for over a week on a slightly bigger scale for 24 hours 6 a.m and your do list like let's go for a walk and you're like let's go for a shower what happens next well it was actually

KATHRIN ZENKINA: 10 hours because i would say 8 p.m the night before is when right before dr rad came and so 6 a.m is now 10 hours in we're going on a walk and i remember this trick the comb trick take like combs you know to comb your hair with and use that to dig into these pressure points that you have in your palm and like you don't really have to remember where the pressure points are because i learned about the pressure points after the fact but it's just like digging these combs that you would naturally be able to like wrap your hands around it and dig into your palms it's going to hit

the pressure point anyway i started to use that to redirect the sensation because your brain can only focus on so many sensations at once

KATHRIN ZENKINA: so it really helped me be able to manage especially those earlier active labor contractions and so it's funny because my doula is to this day is like catherine married those combs like those combs were husband number two and they really were as soon as we went on a walk i walked with those combs my husband grabbed the dogs and i was grabbing onto lori like every contraction i would stop and i would just like fall on her and she would do the counter pressure just a little bit i wasn't having back labor anything like that for a while and she was just like helping me because she's also a body worker so she knows what to do we're walking it's about an hour to walk a block literally i think we walked one block

KATHRIN ZENKINA: it took an hour because all the pausing and i was tired and i was super pregnant and all those things we come back and i go right back into the shower and i think i'm in the shower for literally hours i want to say i was in the shower from like 8 a.m 9 a.m whenever we came home until 1 2 p.m at this point and it makes us so manageable i think the warmth was able to extend the contractions because they were so frequent for me that's the crazy thing they really were so frequent like sometimes a minute sometimes 30 seconds apart two minutes three minutes like if it was crazy and they just kept coming on and on and on and on not that much stronger kind of the same intensity at this point i remember just holding on to this

KATHRIN ZENKINA: like rod that i have in the shower and like literally just like holding on to it with my combs pressing into those combs and then having the hot water in my belly that's how i managed it were you standing standing and sitting i brought the birth ball in there which plays into this whole thing where the photographer arrived i think lori had my husband call the photographer and this is around 2 p.m and also the videographer but there was a little bit of a delay because lori's friends are the photographers so she also texted her so she came first and then the videographer because she reminded my husband like hey it's time for the videographer like things are progressing pretty quickly i remember they always wondering because i'm

KATHRIN ZENKINA: never met the photographer and the videographer I saw over like Zoom. And I remember thinking like, am I going to feel comfortable with so many people? I remember I said, like, I have like a whole squad coming. I did not care. I didn't even notice them. I was so internal. My eyes were closed for the majority of my labor. Like you could bring like the whole building into my apartment and I would probably notice that there's a lot of people in here, but I just would not care. It was amazing. I just did not care. And I like look over in between contractions and I look at my photographer and I was like, Hey, nice to meet you. Me too. You know, I'm just like naked in my shower with this essentially stranger.

KATHRIN ZENKINA: She's just snapping away, snapping away, snapping away. And at some point I remember my husband and photographer are frantically cleaning the bathroom and my doula is in the shower, just like giving me a massage and just, you know, keeping me in the zone of things. And I realized that I made this decision to grab a towel and put in the shower so I can get on my knees and hug my ball for like an additional position. And I put it over the drain. So next thing we know, there's three inches of water in my bathroom. No one says like a thing to me. Like, I just remember hearing

some commotion and like everyone's frantic cleaning and everyone's just keeping the best energy about it.

KATHRIN ZENKINA: I remember they're picking up the rug at one point, putting in the bathtub. I couldn't get into my regular bathtub technically because I was GBS positive and we thought I had a leak. And so that really pissed me off, but the shower was a close second. So that was fine. They put in the bathtub. There's like a bunch of baskets I had everywhere. And they were just like towels galore everywhere. And somehow they cleaned it up so beautifully, so quickly to where you would never know, except now we're missing like the bathroom rug. That's just about it. At some point there's candles all over me, like all around me. They created a beautiful space, beautiful environment. Lori at some point says, I think you're in transition.

KATHRIN ZENKINA: This is around three, four PM. And I remember crying tears of relief because I'm like, Oh my God, I'm almost done with this. Right. Because it was intense. I didn't know how much more intense it would get, but at this point it was intense. And she's like, I think I'm going to call Abby, my midwife and give her the update. So at this point I have the videographer, photographer, and she's also like, get your mom here too, because I had plans for my mom to be at the birth, but she wasn't arriving until later because she had a very important vet appointment to go to. Finally got in with this vet, the specialist for her dog and like this whole thing and Lori is like, no, she needs to cancel it. And so my mom did end up canceling it.

KATHRIN ZENKINA: She comes over and me, my mom and Lori were talking about how it would be so healing for my mom to be on my birth because my mom had so much birth trauma, like horrible, horrible birth experience and thought it would be a great idea for my mom. First of all, to support me, but also see how beautiful birth can be and like how you can be in a loving space. And I had the most loving people around me and it truly was incredible. And my mom arrived and Lori kind of showed her how to give me massages. So my mom got involved and her and Lori were with me in the shower and then at some point it was just my mom. And I remember like this rotation of people coming in and out of the shower with me to help me.

KATHRIN ZENKINA: And I remember being like, wow, why are they like all switching off? I later learned that the bathroom was so hot and so seamy and they were wearing clothes. And after like 10 minutes, no one could handle it except for me. And I was actually cold this whole time. So the hot water, like every time door would open and close and bring in cold air. And I'm like, ah, it's cold. They close the door and they're all like dying. They're just in the sauna at this point. So they have to take shifts.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Sort of laughing because I've been in that same situation. Yeah. Just right down my head very quickly. There's a hospital where this mom, I was supporting her and labor just went a lot longer than she thought. And so at some point, she's like, I need you in here to like squeeze my hips or something and she was in the shower, but like to just make it a little more modest for her. I turned off the lights, but I didn't realize that also turns off the vent. And so after like 45 minutes of being in there, my contact lenses are trying to jump out of my eyeballs. And I'm not quite sure why until I open the door and realize it's like a very, very thick cloud of steam in there. Yeah, I can relate. They're shreds and you're cold. Yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I'm just like, I need it hotter.

KATHRIN ZENKINA: I need a warmer. And they're like, okay, fine. You know, whatever Catherine wants. There is so much trauma that I processed actually through these points. There were moments where I was crying over my bathroom sink, grieving like examples, like my mom, my mom gave birth in Ukraine in like Soviet style hospital. There's no regard for privacy. There's no love whatsoever in that hospital. Like people are yelling at you to shut up because you're screaming in pain. It's unmedicated. They don't do epidurals there. They do have C-sections, but C-sections are like only in the worst case scenarios and people would beg for C-sections because they wanted pain relief. And so there's no such thing as epidural.

KATHRIN ZENKINA: You're just doing it unmedicated, but it's not a loving space. So it feels a hundred times worse. You're being yelled at by the nurses. It's crazy. And so I remember grieving that, like my mom went through that. I can't imagine being in this much pain and intensity and having people yell at me. And here I am, my husband is just like whispering, loving things in my ear. And my doula is just like hugging me, massaging me, saging me, Palo Santo-ing me, like doing energy work, beautiful things. Then I remember grieving like single moms going through this process or women who are in domestic abuse relationships, you know, they don't have a loving space or women are doing it completely

KATHRIN ZENKINA: on their own for other reasons where, you know, perhaps like maybe in the era of like the strictest COVID restrictions where partners were not allowed in the hospital. So I remember just processing that. I remember processing like my childhood in the shower and just sobbing constantly. So emotional that had nothing to do with the pain. It just had to do with all these things that were coming up. My doula at one point, she's like, I feel like we need to scrub a bunch of s*** off of you. I'm like, yeah. So she takes the scrub that I have in the shower and just starts scrubbing me, right? So this is also happening all in between the shower. The shower is like this very eventful place. I'm still married to

KATHRIN ZENKINA: my combs. So my combs never leave. In fact, I had two pairs because at one point I accidentally left a pair in my bathroom. I had another pair in my bedroom. So like anywhere where I'd go, I'd be like, where are my combs? Or like I would find my combs somewhere else. And I'm like, yes, my combs. Okay, perfect. I got tired of the shower and honestly, the shower was so tiring to me. So at some point I left the shower. I go on the couch. My midwife, I think is on her way at this point. My photographer is just snapping pics. I remember of me on the couch. It's me and my husband. He brings my dogs in. My dogs are really sweet. I was worried about one of them. One of them is psycho to this day.

KATHRIN ZENKINA: He's still a puppy. So he just gets like crazy zoomies and so excited and has no idea what's going on ever. And the other one is super aware. And like, I'm pretty sure knew I was in labor because she was being very sweet to me. They did amazing. We had like this whole moment on the couch. And the photographer kept saying, you're doing so good, Catherine. Like you are just handling this like a boss. And I'm like, really? Because I just kept crying and I just kept moaning and groaning. And I was so vocal. And my doula kept reminding me like, okay, this is how you breathe through it. This is how you breathe through it. Okay. Let's flash forward because I don't remember

exactly the timing of all this,

KATHRIN ZENKINA: but somehow I ended up back in the shower. And my midwife comes over finally. You know, my mom's already been there. My midwife comes over and she starts checking me, you know, with the heart rate, the heart rate is great, perfect. And she's like, Catherine, I think you're ready. You know, and they're like, also asking me like, do you feel any pressure in your sacrum? This and that. And I started to feel that. And I started to feel a little pushy, which was very interesting. And she's like, okay, let's get the bath set up. And I'm like, yes, we're almost done. Right. This is amazing. Like, okay, we're reaching the 24 hour mark. Like, I think we're getting there. This is awesome. Like this is the end

KATHRIN ZENKINA: because it was intense. And I get in the bath finally. And the most beautiful space that they made roses everywhere. Does this mean she checked your cervix? No, she just checked the heart rate of the baby and just like asked me how I was. And like, there's like a vein or something in your butt crack that you can look at to determine like how low the baby is apparently. Um, I don't remember exactly how it works, but I just remember my doula posting about this. And she kept looking at my butt crack and she was like, yeah, I think the baby is like lower all this and that you're definitely in transition. Everyone agreed. Like I'm probably eight centimeters, nine centimeters dilated,

KATHRIN ZENKINA: just based off of like my behavior. You know, they've seen so many births, there's certain patterns and trends that you notice. And so they're like, I think you're at that mark. And I haven't had a cervical check because again, GPS positive, we don't want to introduce anything else into the vagina, the cervix, getting up to the baby. And also I think midwives are a little more a conservative because, you know, it just introduces either doubt in your mind or if you're not as dilated as you think you should be all this stuff. So not until, you know, 24 hours, I went without a cervical check and I get in the bathtub and the bathtub was not as hot as the shower and I didn't like it. It was like they kept adding in hot water and it

KATHRIN ZENKINA: would feel good, but then it would cool off. And I'm like, I miss the shower. The shower never goes cold and never changes. It's so consistent. But I was like, but I'm about to push. Like I was just so convinced that the baby is about to come out like within the next 30 minutes. So I have to stay in this bath because I want to give birth in the bathtub. And then the contractions get stronger and stronger and stronger. And I'm getting exhausted by this point because first of all, I haven't slept in like 24 hours. Plus the day I went into labor, I woke up at like 2 33 in the morning and I couldn't go back to bed. I had like this insomnia. And so now I'm like really sleep deprived because I only slept for like four

KATHRIN ZENKINA: hours the night before four or five hours. Plus now I'm already 24 hours into labor. I was so exhausted. I remember crying saying, when is this going to end? And they're like, Catherine, do you feel pushy? This and that like with the contraction, like start to give a little push. And I'm like, okay. And I remember being so afraid. And I remember listening to a couple episodes on your podcast and there was a couple women who were talking about how they just felt scary to push during a contraction through certain contractions. Cause you're like, you kind of like get pushed up against this wall and it's like the only way over the wall is through. And so I'm like, okay, I just have to

go with this

KATHRIN ZENKINA: pain. I just have to lean into it. That's the key to this. And I remember telling myself, you know, this is all mental Catherine, this is all mental. You can do this. You're most likely to give up right before the baby's about to come. Like I've heard so many stories. I knew the trends. I knew the patterns. I'm like, I can do this. Now, a detail I forgot to add was I've been doing hypno babies, which is a hypno birthing course for many, many months leading up to my birth. And I would say it worked beautifully up until active labor and an active labor. I just was trying to bring on that hypno anesthesia and it just wasn't there. It wasn't working. I was getting aggravated. So I just like threw it out the window. Like we're not going

KATHRIN ZENKINA: to worry about the cues and the colors and all the sensations I'm supposed to feel. I'm just going to go with, you know, just talking to myself mentally and giving myself affirmations. And then my husband would also help me, but I told him to shut up when I had the actual contractions. I'm like, do not talk to me because I'm going to punch you. You can tell me all the things in between. And I love the things in between. But during the contraction, everyone please shut up. And so that was the vibe. And I think after some point of me crying in frustration, because I was so exhausted and I just wanted progress. And I felt like I was in the bath forever, where my midwife finally said, Catherine, would you like me to

KATHRIN ZENKINA: check you? And I was like, yes, I would love for you to check me. So that was kind of tricky getting a cervical check in the bathtub, but somehow we made it work. And so we made it work. And I didn't realize how painful it would be. I didn't realize how crampy you would make me feel afterwards. I thought it was just like, we shove the fingers up and we take them out, you know, but it's like, no, she was like, digging in there and all this stuff. And I remember her taking her fingers out and she just didn't say anything. And I was like, okay, what does that mean? And she's like, okay, so you're a four. And I started sobbing. As soon as she said four, I was like, this ain't over for a while.

KATHRIN ZENKINA: And I just started sobbing. And she's like, wait, wait, wait, let me tell you the good news. And I'm like, what, what is the good news? And she's like, your cervix is like paper thin, like it can just open at any moment. Like it's so paper thin. The only issue is you have so much fluid that the baby's head is not really helping you dilate because it's so far up the cervix in between all this fluid. Like it's just like, I'm like touching a balloon up there, just filled with so much water and I'm not really feeling the head because of that. So I think what we can do because the baby's so high up, we're going to do a bunch of exercises. And I call them exercises from hell to this day. I think they're from spinning

KATHRIN ZENKINA: babies. Technically, I forgot exactly the names of each of them. But we go through this series of the most painful exercises that you could possibly do while having a contraction. It was insane. It was like, I had to lean on my midwife and she would like push her hands into my belly to try to get him further and deeper into my pelvis through different. Yeah, I had to do it for 10 contractions. Dry land. 10 contractions. Yeah, I got out of the bathtub because I'm like, I need to progress this stat like four is not good enough for me. Like it's been 24 hours and I'm only out of four like we can't do this. So I signed up for exercises from hell. So we do 10 contractions like that. Then she's like, Okay, now we have to go to the dining room

KATHRIN ZENKINA: table. And I'm like, Excuse me, what are we doing at the dining room table? lunch? And so which is funny, because I remember at some point in the shower being like, did everyone find their snacks? Because I bought special snacks for the labor team. And I'm sure cutery. Yeah, it didn't get to the shark. You didn't get that. Okay. We had fruit. We had coffee. But it got even better. Because beyond the snacks, my husband ordered straight up like dinner for everybody. Like there's like a buffet in the kitchen. And I remember coming out and I'm like, this is where the party's at. I'm like, food boxes everywhere. There's like a different vibe in the living room. It's like the place where they go to like kind of escape for a second and then

KATHRIN ZENKINA: come back to the first room. It's the break room. My living room is a break room. And we come to the dining room table and they clear it. And I'm like, What are we about to do? And she's like, Okay, you're gonna lie down the half of your body. So from your pelvis upward is going to be flat on the dining room table. And then your legs are basically going to hang off. And I'm like, great, fantastic. And I'm like, how many contractions and she's like three. And I'm like, oh my god, at this point, they're so painful. I'm almost screaming through them. So I'm like, great. But I'm doing whatever it takes. Like I better be a 10 after this, right. So we're doing the exercises. And I have pictures of this. And it's literally like everyone

KATHRIN ZENKINA: one has their hands on me, like mostly for support. And there's like my mom kind of holding me down. It a little bit triggered this trauma where when I was six years old, I split my lip in half at a bookstore. Fantastic story. I know I literally tripped over carpet, landed on a corner of a bench in the corner of a bench, split my lip. And my mom took me to the emergency room. She didn't really speak good English. Like we're pretty much FOBs at this point. And so she didn't know like, oh, like we could sue the bookstore maybe, you know what I mean? Like my mom's just like, oh my God, we just have to go to the ER and take care of this. And so she took me to the ER and

KATHRIN ZENKINA: I remember them strapping me down and holding me down to give me stitches. And so it kind of triggered that, but not really because I remembered, you know, this is a safe space, like it's a loving space, but I was feeling pain while being held down. So I'm like, oh my God, this is really more intense than I thought it would be. I remember asking, can I please like sit up between contractions like having you have to stay in this position? I felt like my back was going to break in half, but I made it through. I remember at one point I noticed someone in my house that I don't remember. And then I realized it was like my midwife's student assistant that I haven't never met. And I was like, who's this person? And then I realized she's with the

KATHRIN ZENKINA: midwives because she's handing them things and like they're talking to her. I'm like, okay, cool. And that's how I know like literally anyone can come in the space and apparently I'm fine with it. Like I'm just chill. And I know everyone had great energy. So I know like probably if they didn't have the best energy I would notice, but because everyone had such great energy I never noticed. Then we go to the bedroom and we continue with two more exercises. These are a little bit less painful, but still I was so tired of being out of the shower. All I was thinking about was like, take me back to the shower. So after some time after all the exercises, which I think lasted about an hour because we had to take it through so many

KATHRIN ZENKINA: contractions, maybe even two hours, my midwife is like, do you want me to check you again? And here's a detail that I want to share real quick because after the fact, after the birth, that first cervical check, my midwife told me like when she was doing a newborn exam, then like the next day she was like, do you want to know the truth about that moment? And I was like, wait, what? What's the truth, Abby? And she's like, when I checked you, I had to put on the biggest poker face in my life. And I'm like, why? And she's like, because you were actually a one centimeter, but I could open you to a four. That's why I said four. And I'm like, oh my God, 24 hours to get to one centimeter. And

KATHRIN ZENKINA: but I also wonder if that's why it was so intense. Yeah. It's not

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: just like, go see where you're at. It was like sort of a little maneuver.

KATHRIN ZENKINA: Yeah. Okay, so after the exercises, she checks me again. And she's like, okay, you're like at a five. And I'm like, that sucks balls. Like, like that is the last thing I want to hear. And at this point, the cervical check made me start cramping more bleeding. I remember sitting on like these pads on my bed, because she did it on my bed. And I'm just like, starting to bleed everywhere. And I'm like, I hate seeing my own blood. I don't mind. I'm not queasy with other people's blood and like other people's medical things, but my own if I see my own blood, I start freaking out a little bit. And I remember getting queasy and just being like, can I get back in the shower? And actually before this, my

KATHRIN ZENKINA: midwife is like, okay, here's what we can do. She's like, we can let it progress the way it's progressing currently, which you are making progress, Catherine, like, I just want to remind you, you are making progress. I know it's not as fast as you want it to be, but you are making progress. So we can let it progress the way it is. And I remember in my head being like, hell no. Like, this is too slow. Number two, she's like, we can break your water. But if we break your water, she's like, I just want to let you know, it is now an intervention that we're introducing into the home birth space. I know, like there's a risk of cord prolapse. I remember she called Dr. Rad and she's like, was there in your ultrasound,

KATHRIN ZENKINA: they got ahead and ultrasound so close to like basically the start of labor, because they could see exactly what was going on and what his position was. And he did not see the cord below the baby's head. So that's a great sign. But she's like, but we want to be super careful. It would be about a 30 minute process because we wouldn't just break it, we would poke it and let it do a slow leak. So the baby's head would very slowly come down. We would basically essentially hold his head and bring it down to your cervix. You would have to be in bed for 30 minutes. So all those contractions and it would intensify your labor, so much more. And I remember being like, I don't like that plan either.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: They're not big enough combs in the world.

KATHRIN ZENKINA: I know. And I remember from the very beginning, my 10 week appointment, I remember looking at Abby and being like, my number one fear in birth is cord prolapse. Like I read about cord prolapse. And I don't like it. And she's like, Catherine, like we would know like, there's so many signs leading up to it. Like, don't worry, like you're going to be fine. And I'm like, okay, so I, you

know, I trusted my birth team through this whole process, never had any fears come up except in this moment. And like, in my head instantly, I think I'd much rather have my water broken in the hospital than at home, because at least if anything happens, I'm already there. Like we're already primed for a c-section, right?

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: cord prolapse, you know, essentially what happens here is because the head is not down low, blocking your cervix, then you know, if the cord comes through first from the uterine side to the birth canal, and then the baby comes through, the cord can get compressed, which is a serious medical emergency. But the way I see it right now, you have the choice to just not break your water and just keep things going at the slow pace that they're going, or have them do this like slowly to try to bring the head down so it is covering your cervix at home, or it sounds like in your mind, maybe go do that same thing, but at the hospital. And I still have no idea where this is headed, but I do feel like it's time for a second break. So when we come

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: back, we'll get the rest of the story. Welcome back. We are talking to Katherine Zinkina, and I don't know where we're headed, but we're at a crossroads. Things are moving very slow. They're becoming very intense for you. And you either could keep going at that slow pace, your midwives could do a slow water break at home, or did they give you other options?

KATHRIN ZENKINA: There was a third. And for some reason for a life for me, I don't remember it. I want to say they said, like, you can go get extra support at the hospital, but I don't think they said at this point, I don't think it was ever anything brought up until much later. But I remember asking, can I go back in the shower? And they're like, yes. And I'm like, perfect. Goodbye, right? Like I'm going to like, like, I've had enough. I'm like, so aggravated with the process by this point. And I just remember going back to the shower. And yet still these contractions are I swear to you, every 30 seconds to a minute apart, I'm not getting a break. And at this point, I started getting back labor.

KATHRIN ZENKINA: And it's so weird, because usually, back labor could be from the baby's positioning changing. I don't think his position changed. And it was so interesting because back labor also comes from the baby being low in the pelvis, which we know he's not low. But I get back labor. And I remember my mom, I was like, Mom, I need your fists on my back. Like, do not let go. And she's in the shower with me, like helping me with that. And then of course, her and my husband started doing shifts. And at this point, I didn't know this, but the entire birth team goes to the living room, the break room, and they start calling up people like my midwife was trained by her aunt who's been a

KATHRIN ZENKINA: midwife for 20 years. She starts asking, like, what are our options? What can we do? Here's a scenario. Here's a situation. She's not dilating babies so high up. I remember he was just in my ribs, like every contraction, it would wrap around his ribs, causing me additional discomfort. So that really sucked. And I remember them calling, whatever, they're like making a plan. And my husband, at some point went to go talk to them and comes back and starts telling me repeating what my midwife said. And I'm like, I still don't like any of these plans, but I'm in the shower and I'm fine here for now. This is when, very interestingly enough, my backup OBGYN, Dr. Paul Crane starts flashing in my mind.

KATHRIN ZENKINA: And I remember going, Catherine, do not give up. Do not be a sissy. Like, you're strong, you can do this. Like, don't give up. And I remember starting feeling shame for even

thinking of a possible epidural. It sounded so good in the moment, but I wanted that home birth so bad. And I'm like, Crane, get out of here. Get out of my head. You're not welcome in this space. Get out of my mind. And he just kept flashing in my head, flashing in my head, flashing in my head. And I'm like, this is really interesting. I could really use some sleep. I could really use some rest. An epidural sounds so nice to me. But no, Catherine, you're not allowed to think about it. You're doing a home birth.

KATHRIN ZENKINA: You're going to get through this. We're going to get to the end. Do not go to the hospital under any circumstances, unless it's an emergency, of course. Of course, I was always open, duh, to go to the hospital if there's an emergency. But there's no emergency with my birth. Like, it's progressing fine, I guess. You know, there's no emergency. We're going through it. And my husband comes back, I think like three hours go by. Another three hours go by. And again, my husband comes back in. My midwife periodically checks me. Like, everyone's taking shifts. I'm constantly being checked on. At some points, I'm in the shower alone, which actually feels nice, too, just to be really internal without any noise coming

KATHRIN ZENKINA: in from anybody else. At some point, my husband goes, okay, Catherine, like, again, we can keep progressing. Or no, okay, so they recommend you go to bed and try to go to sleep. And I'm like, I'm sorry, people. I'm having these contractions every like minute apart. They are so intense and painful. And if I leave the shower, they get more intense and painful. There's no way I'm laying in bed. In fact, laying down or sitting down was the worst thing. Every time I would lay down and try to go through a contraction lying down, I would have to get on all fours, smash my head into a pillow and scream into it. That's the only way. day I can get through it. Wow. And so I'm like, no, I'm staying in the shower. And I remember at some point, I

KATHRIN ZENKINA: almost fall off my birth ball in the shower, because I'm like starting to doze off and fall asleep, because I'm really exhausted at this point. At this point, we're about 30 hours in. And at this point, I go, I'm ready for the hospital, like I'm ready for an epidural, because I don't know how much longer I can stay awake, I don't know how much longer I can, you know, wait until I get to 10 centimeters, and then I need all that energy to push, like I have no energy to even sit here in between contractions, barely have the energy for the contractions themselves, like there's just no way. And my husband comes in, and he knew my birth plan, my birth preferences, I should say, he knew I was so gung ho about the home birth element and all this

KATHRIN ZENKINA: stuff. And we have a whole team for it. We've been preparing for it for like 10 months, right straight. And he reiterates to me like, okay, Catherine, you have this option, this option, or he finally says the third option, they're saying, you can always go to Dr. Crane at Cedars-Sinai and get an epidural. And I look at him and I'm like, I want that epidural. And he's like, Catherine, I just want to remind you that right before the baby's about to come out, everyone wants the epidural, everyone wants to give up. Are you sure that's what you want? And I look at him and like, I'm not being heard right now. I feel guilted right now by you, like I feel shamed by you right now. And really, it was my own self

KATHRIN ZENKINA: shame just being projected at him. And I was like, I want to go to the hospital. And he's like, okay, let me go tell the birth team. And so sweet, Abby comes in like five minutes later,

she's like, Catherine, there is no need to feel bad about that. And that's always an option. Like it's your birth, you can do whatever you want. We can be here for three days straight because we're not the ones in labor. You're the one in labor. And we know how hard that is. We know it's so much work. You're exhausted. And she's like, most home birth transfers end up in the hospital out of exhaustion. That's purely what it is like the mom needs sleep in order to regain the energy to continue on with labor. And I was like, I am so exhausted. All I want is

KATHRIN ZENKINA: sleep. But here's where the fun part begins is now I have to get out of the shower to get to the hospital. It's a whole journey to get to the hospital with being in that much pain, contractions that close together. So thankfully, my midwife, I asked her I'm like, with a home birth, do you still recommend packing a hospital bag, you know, just in case because I'm like, I don't know if that invites in the energy of like manifesting the plan not going to plan, or that's actually something helpful. And she reminded me she was like, Catherine, the more flexible you are with your birth, the more likely it is to go to plan. She's like all of my clients who refuse to have that hospital bag packed in the corner, just they

KATHRIN ZENKINA: never have to look at it, just pack it and just like hope or just plan on never using it like unpack it after the birth. Like it's simple, just have the backpack, have it there. And so thankfully, I listened to that advice. And she's like, all my clients who are inflexible, they end up getting c sections, all of them, the most inflexible people and the ones that are flexible, they are the most likely to have their birth go to plan. So my great idea. And my husband, you can see the sheer panic in his eyes. When I said hospital, he's like, Oh, my god, what do we do? What do we have to pack? And I'm like, Brennan, everything's already packed. Just look under the snoo, because I had a snoo in the corner. And I'm like, look under

KATHRIN ZENKINA: there, there's a suitcase, there's your backpack, my backpack and a breastfeeding pillow, like grab all those things. And, you know, I have to get out of the shower. So by time I walk over to towel myself off, I have a contraction. By the time I go walk to my closet to grab my slippers, I have another contraction. By the time I get up, my pajamas on, I get my pants on, right? Like another contraction. So it's a very long process. My mom is married to my lower back. Literally, my lower back, I still have my combs in my hand. They're not helping too much at this point, but I think they're still helping. They're like a comfort measure at this point. And she's married to my lower back and we're walking down my hallway. I have another

KATHRIN ZENKINA: contraction. I get to my living room is another contraction. I remember my assistant who works at my house in the mornings and early afternoons. This is now 1am and she's in my house. Like literally like anyone can come in and I just wouldn't know it. Like she's in there. She wanted to help. Apparently she wanted to be part of the birth, mainly as an assistant, like helping the birth team if they needed more coffee, if she needed to go get something, this and that. And she was the one who packed her car. So thank God for her. She packed her car. Now at this point, we're headed to Cedar Sinai and only my doula and my husband could come because you can have your partner, one support person. So Lori is like the people joke all the

KATHRIN ZENKINA: time. She's like the unofficial mayor of Cedar Sinai. Like she runs the show there. Everyone knows her. She's like the boss. Like I felt so comfortable with her because she knew

all my birth preferences and I knew that I wouldn't be messed with at the hospital. Like everything would go my way. So thank God. And I had the backup OB Paul Crane and I vetted him and I knew him and I had appointments with him. I had an ultrasound with him. Like I knew and he had a room waiting for us. So it was kind of like the I knew I'd be taken care of. But just that process of now getting in the car, my husband's the one who's driving, Lori's in her own car, and now I have back labor, who's going to

KATHRIN ZENKINA: do the counter pressure? So I grab my breastfeeding pillow, which is kind of like a firmer one. It's the my breast friend one. And I put it behind me and I'm ramming with every contraction riding in the car. I am ramming in my back into the back seat while also like pushing onto this because I was in the back seat onto Brennan's seat and just like screaming. No pictures of this. Well, we have pictures of the hospital, but no pictures of this in particular. I wish we get to the hospital and guess what? What? We're about to drive into the parking garage and the clearance is six to our G Wagon cannot fit that clearance. So I'm like, mother frick, like, get me the epidural.

KATHRIN ZENKINA: And I remember it knowing it's going to be a process because you have to get checked in. You got to do this and that. It might be like a hundred contractions by the time I get to this epidural. But I'm just like, OK, at least we're on the path. Like, I just remember the finish line of sleep. I don't even care about the birth anymore. I remember my do like saying, just connect to your baby. And I remember seeing my baby and this process as kind of being separate because I was so in my body. I saw it as like I'm alone in this and this is just me and my body at this point. It has nothing to do with the baby. Like the baby was just like a thing that I didn't remember until I got sleep

KATHRIN ZENKINA: because I was so exhausted. And I was like, OK, it's going to be like a hundred contractions, but at least at some point I'm just going to fall asleep and it's all going to be over. And OK, at this point, my doula comes up the plan. She's like, OK, Catherine, I'm going to meet you at the entrance of the parking garage and we're going to walk up this hill essentially together. We're going to walk into the hospital. And I'm like, oh, my gosh, like the super steep hill where the cars go.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yes. Oh, walking up there with contractions. Wow. I struggle walking up there with no contractions.

KATHRIN ZENKINA: Yeah. And very steep. It's very steep. And we walk up to the security. And of course, the security has an issue with Laurie for some reason. And like not letting her in. And I remember me and my husband agreed. We're like, if it's me and my husband in the hospital, we prefer me and Laurie. Like if one person for some reason couldn't come, I want my doula there over my husband, which is very interesting. But my rationale and he was totally aligned with this. Our rationale behind it was like Laurie just knows what's going on. We have no idea what's going on. We've never given birth in a hospital. We don't know what they do, what they don't do, like what the procedures are. Like we need someone who's in the right space, who's done this

KATHRIN ZENKINA: a million times, who can be able to guide me. But thankfully, all three of us got through. We go up and we're checking in and they're asking me a million questions. Yes. And it's not like I was in labor for like four hours. I'm like, OK, time to go to the hospital. Like this is 30 plus hours in. I've been in this for a long time. They're asking me questions. I cannot comprehend them. I remember them asking for my ID, for my insurance card. And I'm like looking for these things. And

then I have to pause every minute and just go, oh, like and thankfully there's no one around really, except for us and the people checking us in, because it's like 2 a.m. now.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: It's weird. I don't get it. Like when we used to check into hotels 20 years ago, before there was online check and all that, you would wait in line and then they would have a million questions. Yeah, I just want to go to the room. I just want to go to sleep. I want to sleep. I want to shower. Yeah. But your story is so interesting that we're going to have a fourth segment. So let's take a little break and then we'll really find out the rest of the story. Welcome back to the podcast. We're talking about Catherine's and Tina. I don't even know how you lived through this. You know, just so much intensity and not just in your body. Obviously, there's a lot of intensity in your body, but in your mind

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: and some of the things that you're talking about, you know, just processing for other women, how they go through it without this kind of support and trauma and violence. And, you know, some of the things that you experienced as a child, as a young adult, as well, just burning through all that emotionally while at the same time burning through this very, very intense journey physically. Wow. I mean, thankfully, you're very strong. Thankfully, you had picked out some really great support for yourself. So at this point, you've walked up to Steep Hill. You're checked into the hospital. Checking in. No, we're still checking in. You're doing the 20 year old hotel check in.

KATHRIN ZENKINA: I remember at some point she's like, OK, while your husband's doing this, I'm going to have you sign a bunch of things on this iPad. And my husband goes, oh, no, she's not like I'm going to read through exactly what she's signing before she signs it, because that's my husband. He's like the contract guy. He loves to read all my contracts like hates it when I sign contracts because I'm just like, yeah, I skim through it. ever. Like I know the importance of it. But like, most of the time, that signings a huge life or death contracts, but essentially in a hospital, like you want to read the contract. Yeah, it is life or death at this point. So he's reading through them. And of course

KATHRIN ZENKINA: I'm like, Oh, right. Like moaning and groaning. And then you know how like, when papers ask for your initials versus signature, it's like the initials box is tiny and the signature one is big. So you kind of know like what to do where. No, all the boxes are the same size. You have to read this tiny initials here, signature here. So we had to redo a bunch of signatures because the hospital's like, Nope, you can't have your initials here has to be your signature. And I'm like, get me an epidural. That's all. Just take me to the room, get me the epidural and I'll sign everything afterwards. And of course you can't do that. So at some point, thank God we already had a room. Crane was going to meet us there. We finally walked to

KATHRIN ZENKINA: room nine or whatever room. I just remember hearing a number and I'm like, yes. You get into the room and I'm like, I need an epidural stat. Like I need sleep again. Yes, the pain was intense, but I feel like it wasn't the pain at this point. It was really the exhaustion. And of course, you know, the pain relief would be nice, but it was really the exhaustion. I just wanted to sleep. I needed energy. I was falling apart. And of course we come into like, well, yes, we're going to get you one ASAP promise, but we need to do the fluids first. We need to get an IV in and like, it's going to be another 10 to 20 minutes. And I'm like counting how many contractions that is, right? That's all I'm

processing through. I'm like,

KATHRIN ZENKINA: how many contractions is that? And even before that, the nurse starts asking a bunch of questions. Like, why are you here? What happened? This and that. And I'm like, Oh my God. Okay. So I'm like hunched over the hospital bed now through these contractions. Laurie's helping answer all the questions. Thank God. They come to do an IV. And if I'm so dehydrated at this point, because I forgot I was vomiting all throughout my whole labor, could not eat or drink a thing. I remember they kept offering me watermelon and like really hydrating foods. I maybe ate like three pieces of watermelon in the last 30 plus hours. And mind you, I had dinner at like 5pm, you know, before my labor started. So it's even longer, no food, barely any water.

KATHRIN ZENKINA: I'm so dehydrated. They can't find my veins. They go in, they start poking and prodding. I think they blew through like three veins. Yeah. Exactly. And I have my combs still. And thankfully, the combs, the combs worked beautifully for these needles. I did not feel the needles until they started digging through. And then it was pretty manageable with the combs. And they're like, Oh, no, we have to get another nurse who is more skilled to try again. And I'm like, Oh my God. Okay. So the nurse comes in, she gets it in right away. Thank God. Okay, we're good. They're like, now we have to wait 10 to 15 minutes for you get the fluid. And I'm like, okay, then finally, the anesthesiologist walks in, and she introduces

KATHRIN ZENKINA: herself. And I think she was like a student, like a resident anesthesiologist, and my doula, Lori, she goes, No, we don't do that here. We need the attending anesthesiologist, please. So of course, it's a whole another process. But thankfully, she prepares me. So she like wipes my back. And I remember thinking, like, I don't really want the epidural. Like I remember looking at the hospital and the sterile environment, like, this is not what I want. But I want sleep more than anything. So I'm willing to go through these things. I'm grateful these things exist so that I'm able to get the rest that I so badly deserve. So the anesthesiologist walks in. And of course, at this moment, I'm like, Oh, my

KATHRIN ZENKINA: God, like, I never wanted my spine to be messed with, like, Oh, my God, this is so scary as a needle going into my spine. And I remember just like, because I'm very spiritual, I remember praying for all my angels, all my guides, God, angels, universe, whoever is watching over me to just protect me in this moment and make sure that everything goes fine and there's no complications, that it actually works, because there's a risk that it might not work. And I was afraid of that risk. And so she was like, you're going to feel, you know, these weird sensations. And it was weird. Like, I felt liquid pouring down my spine. It was the most bizarre, like feeling I've ever felt. Like inside. Yeah, like you can just feel

KATHRIN ZENKINA: water going down your spine. Wow. It was bizarre. And then she says it might take 10 to 15 minutes for it to kick in. And again, I'm like, please, God, like, no, like, make it kick in immediately. And thankfully, within two minutes, I was numb. So it kicked in really fast. And I react very quickly to like supplements and medicines and just my body's very sensitive. So thank God it kicked in quickly. And then I went numb. And then crane walks in and he's like, Hi, guys. And it's so cute. And it's so amazing that he was there because he was only there for the purpose of my birth. So he came in at 2am, like look like he just woke up like Laurie just woke him up out of bed, of course,

I'm sure he was sleeping at home. And

KATHRIN ZENKINA: then he walked into the hospital and he's like, Okay, what's going on? Let's check you. When they checked me. I was still I think like a five and a half. Wow. All that whole process. I only dial a like maybe half a centimeter to maybe maybe he said six. But it was, again, if I was at home, I would still be like five and a half or six, right? And I was like, thank God I got this epidural because now I can fully dilate because I can relax. I can sleep. So Crane says, all right, we're going to just see how you progress. I'll come back in a couple of hours. I'm like, yes, everybody leave for a couple of hours. Do not touch me. Do not talk to me. Let me sleep. So my husband sleeps on the couch.

KATHRIN ZENKINA: My doula makes a bed out of pillows on the floor. And my husband's like, no, no, Laura, you're going to sleep on the couch. And she's like, no, you're sleeping on the couch. I'm here all the time. I know how to make a bed out of these pillows. Like I'm great. I do this all the time. Like just let me be on the floor. So she's on the floor. And she's been with me now for a total of 40 hours. Like she was hands on me, like with me for now, 40 hours, like doula of the year so far. And the day right after she just did a birth, right after she did birth. And what's crazy is that right after my birth, she had another birth. And I was like, Laurie, you better sleep for two weeks after all these births

KATHRIN ZENKINA: are finally done. So I get sleep. And I remember around 5am crane walks in nurses walk in, they're coming to check me. And I think they were like flipping me from side to side in between. But I don't remember any of this because I was just so deep in my sleep. I was just like, whatever, move me however you want. I don't care. And at some point it started to wear off and I could feel his butt in my ribs again. And it was causing me that discomfort that I did not want to feel. And I was trying to explain to them that I don't feel pain. I feel immense discomfort in my ribs. Can you please up the epidural? Like I am losing numbness on the top half of my belly. I'm numb from the legs down. I'm numb from like my belly button down.

KATHRIN ZENKINA: But I'm starting to feel his butt in my ribs and it's really uncomfortable, which just shows that he's still so high up. Right? Like it's crazy. And they're like, okay, okay, okay. But when you're about to push, we have to turn down the epidural. I'm like, that's fine. I'll be able to handle it around that point. Like just numb me again. So they do. And I want to say if you've never had an epidural, it is the wildest thing to ever exist because I knew that you would go numb. Like I knew that you would not feel your legs or your abdomen, essentially. I did not know that your brain literally disconnects from your legs to the point where I would look at my legs when I would see them, when they would uncover the blankets to move me.

KATHRIN ZENKINA: And I would go, I'm not supposed to have legs. Where do these legs come from?

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

KATHRIN ZENKINA: And I'm like, what? Because like logically, I'm like, no, Catherine, you have legs. You have an epidural. But like illogically, I'm like, I have legs. What? Whose legs are these? It was so crazy. And then later on during the pushing part, when I was holding my own legs, I felt like I

was holding a dead body's legs.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh my gosh.

KATHRIN ZENKINA: The only indication that they were my legs or they were not a dead body's legs was that they were warm. But other than that, my brain fully disconnected from them. Okay. So hours and hours go by. He kept checking me. I'm only dilating another like centimeter at a time. Hours and hours and hours. Right? So there's a total of 12 hours for me to finally get to a nine. And it was at the nine mark. This is now 2 PM the next day. And it was only around this time where he was like, your cervix again is paper thin. I think that if we try some practice pushes right now, the head, oh, and I forgot he broke my water. He broke my water around like six in the morning. And because we're in a hospital and

KATHRIN ZENKINA: he confirmed with an ultrasound, like we're fine to break the water, nothing's going to happen. He just did like a fast break. Like I remember water just gushing out everywhere. So now like the baby's head was like assisting, but it was still very slow process. Oh my God. And he was like, I think that with a push, the head will just kind of like open you up naturally like that last centimeter and you'll be able to push even though you're a nine right now. And this is where they really start coaching me. Like Catherine pushing with an epidural is way different than a natural birth. You're going to need to work harder than you've ever worked in your life. Like you need a ton of energy. We're going to get you all juiced

KATHRIN ZENKINA: up with apple juice, like all this sugar to get you all this energy in your body. My doula starts giving me a course on pushing on the floor, the hospital floor. She literally gets on the floor, shows me how it's done, coaches me through it, tells me exactly how to breathe. They're like all like, Catherine, you can do this. Like just remember like you have to do this. You have to push because we don't want this to progress into a C-section because the hospital is going to get a little freaked out that you've been in labor for so long. Even though Dr. Crane is such a fighter for your birth preferences in the hospital, like it's going to be the hospital's roles, right? He has to abide by them. So you're going

KATHRIN ZENKINA: to have to push this baby out. So I remember thinking, I'm going to give him the best pushes of my life. I'm going to manifest this baby out of me so quickly. And I literally visualize, because now I can think straight. I can visualize like Crane, Lori, my husband, and the one nurse there being like, oh, oh, this baby's really coming out. Like we really need to prepare, you know, to catch the baby. Like the things are, wow, she's pushing amazing. Like whatever I thought I would hear. And then I give them one push and they're like, exactly how I envisioned it. Wow, oh my God, I moved the baby, the baby's head by like an inch or two with one push. And they're like, oh my God, okay. So Crane starts like dressing up, you know,

KATHRIN ZENKINA: to catch the baby, this and that. Like the nurse who went on a lunch break, who was my nurse for the majority of the night, they start like calling her back, like, hey, like things are progressing quickly, all this stuff. Or I think she had to take like a mandatory lunch break and I think that they thought she was gonna miss like the baby coming out. She came in like right, perfect timing, all this stuff. I pushed for maybe because we have footage of this. My husband set up a full frontal 4K camera in front, right? Because we didn't have the videographer there anymore. So he was now the

videographer. And I was like, I want this all filmed. I don't care how raw and real it gets. I want it all filmed forever. So he sets up the camera.

KATHRIN ZENKINA: And again, I'm like pushing for five minutes and I'm like, Brennan, get the camera out right now. And they're all like, Brennan set up the camera, because I remember like I wanted the camera. And I remember telling the nurse, I need to know the exact time this baby is born. Like the exact time because astrology is major in my life and human design and all these things that you need birth time for. So I need the exact time. And she's like, don't worry, we got you. There's two of us that check the time when the baby's out. And I'm like, perfect. So I'm like lining everyone up and everyone's lining each other up. And we're like, okay, we're gonna do this. I have the footage of the camera. So I remember them telling me I pushed for an hour,

KATHRIN ZENKINA: but when I reviewed the footage, it was 12 minutes into the video that the baby came out. And my midwife was on FaceTime. So Lori FaceTimed Abby. And so she was basically at the birth watching it on FaceTime. And she even told me like yesterday, she was like, yeah, I think you only pushed for 20 minutes. Like I was only on FaceTime for 20 minutes and the baby came out. I'm like, okay, perfect. I saw the birth, like time to go. And I will tell you, like I could now feel like the head and it was like the best feeling in the world. Like it was just so relieving just to feel the head in the canal. Of course, there was no pain attached to it because I had an epidural, but I could feel the pressure. And I was like, oh my God, this is almost over

KATHRIN ZENKINA: because now I could connect to the baby. Now I could connect, like I'm giving birth to a baby. I'm not just in pain for no reason, right? It's not intense just for no reason. There's a baby coming out. And my husband, I always wondered, is he gonna be the guy who looks or is he gonna be the guy who looks away? This guy was watching this. Like this is the best national geographic documentary he's ever seen in his life. And he was like play by play telling me what's going on. And they had a mirror in front of me because I wanted to see what's going on. I'm that person leading up to this birth that would constantly on Instagram, I followed so many birth accounts that seeing a head come out of a woman's vagina

KATHRIN ZENKINA: was like seeing a selfie on Instagram. It was like nothing to me. I've seen so many heads come out of vaginas on my phone, you know, for the duration of these 10 months that like seeing it on my own was just like the same thing. So I loved having the mirror. I loved seeing the hair and the head and all this stuff. And my husband was like play by playing like, oh my God, babe, the head's out. Oh my God, oh my God. And he's like so excited. And I'm like, this is amazing. Like he's one of those guys that's looking. That's awesome. And at one point they tell me to touch the head and it was like the weirdest feeling ever. I remember someone on your podcast saying it was like really sweat and squishy. That's exactly what it was.

KATHRIN ZENKINA: I just felt something wet and squishy between my legs. I'm like, this is kind of weird. And then they're like, okay, grab the baby. And I look down and I just like grab him underneath his like armpits and lift him and put him on my chest. And I was like, I did it. And it was a total of 43 or 44 hours from the moment I went into labor until the moment this little guy was on my chest. And you always wonder like when he comes out, like what is he gonna look like or what is she gonna look like? And I remember looking at his face and being like, oh, wow, you look nothing like I thought you would

look like. First of all, I thought you would be way more swollen. I thought you would have a cone head. He didn't have a cone head.

KATHRIN ZENKINA: Probably because he wasn't in the-

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, because of all the fluid.

KATHRIN ZENKINA: Yeah, all the fluid. And he wasn't in the canal for very, very long, right? And then he wasn't that swollen. He was so cute. Like such a beautiful little fresh, you know, right out the gate newborn. So cute. And I just remember like there's pictures in me where like you could see so much relief. Just like, oh, it's over. And then I remember my midwife saying, I'm seeing recently a ton of bleeding with my patients who have gotten COVID during their pregnancy. And unfortunately I got COVID like two weeks before I gave birth. And it was a very, very mild, but of course the combination of pregnancy, like it felt way worse than it actually was. And she was like, tell me how we might have to incorporate some Pitocin,

KATHRIN ZENKINA: you know, right after birth to stop the bleeding. And I'm like, okay, fine. And I remember asking Karine, I'm like, am I bleeding a lot? You know, like, cause I'm just so curious about everything. And he was like, no, way less than average blood. Like way less than average. And I'm like, okay. And then I'm like, is the placenta coming out? And he's like. it's detached, I can tell it's detached. And then I remember him saying, okay, the placenta is out. And of course I didn't feel the placenta coming out at all because I'm numb again. And second of all, it's nowhere near the size of the baby's head and it's much squishier and slippery. And so that comes out and he starts like showing the placenta and like, of course,

KATHRIN ZENKINA: my husband is like filming this. Like he has like a documentary. Yeah. I mean, that's pretty much it. We do skin to skin. My husband does skin to skin, it's so emotional. And this baby is so alert and aware and awake. The nurses are like, we don't know how, but he's like already tracking us. He's like tracking all the noises. It's just like, anyway, my point with all this is like, I made it through 44 hours. And I have to say like the reward on the other side, like this little baby is just so worth it. And they say like, you really forget about the pain. Nature does it so you forget about the pain and intensity. I wouldn't say I forgot, but I would totally do it again. And I've been asking my midwife, I'm like, okay,

KATHRIN ZENKINA: I still want a home birth. Like, I'm not done. We're doing a home birth next time. I have to get my home birth. And she's like, well, Catherine, baby number two comes out faster. The labor is actually less intense. It's faster and progresses so much faster. And the baby just shoots right out compared to the first one. And since this baby shot right out, as soon as you get your first contraction, you're gonna have to call us. And I'm like, perfect. I'm so excited. Oh my gosh. But yeah, that's my story.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: What an amazing story and what an amazing human. I have a feeling we're gonna talk again. First of all, how old is the baby now?

KATHRIN ZENKINA: He is a month old yesterday.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Okay, so this was about a month ago. I kind of wanna connect again, like a month or two down the road because you're so intuitive and you have such a, I don't know, a clear way of processing things and clearly your flow chart. I mean, we talk about it all the time that your birth point is a flow chart. So that home birth was your vision for page one. Like if I can do this anyway, all things being equal, I wanna do it right here in my house. But I feel like a few months down the road, there'll be a whole different level of processing from you on the different stages. And the fact that you've laid it out so clearly, like the different twists and turns and what was going through your mind and what was going through your body

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: at the different stages, I'm very curious to talk to you a few months down the road and see what you've got.

KATHRIN ZENKINA: I'm so down, yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: All right, we're gonna be back. In the meantime, I will say, where can I buy some manifestation combs?

KATHRIN ZENKINA: There's actually an account that follows me recently and they're called, I think, the Wave Comb. And I think it's designed for labor, specifically. I was just using cheap Amazon, like $1 combs. That's why I had so many of them because I'm just like, oh, screw it. I mean, just have two or three pairs around everywhere. And I remember reading the reviews and I'm like, everyone's like, I use these in labor and they did not break. And I'm like, perfect, unbreakable plastic combs. But apparently there's products that exist that are specific for labor. I think it's called the Wave Comb.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I want manifestation wave combs. Yeah, I'm gonna have to create them. Yes, because I really feel like it's probably not just labor. It's like anything like that where you kind of need to get a grip on your body and sort of get your body under the control of your mind. I just know people who can't even get their blood drawn. But it seems like if they were squeezing those combs, they might have a better shot at not passing out.

KATHRIN ZENKINA: I agree. I mean, I worked for my needles. Like I definitely did not feel the needles going in and I'm sensitive to needles going in. Like I always feel them. So yeah, totally.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Well, I appreciate you. I'm gonna follow you, continue to follow you always because you inspire me in a lot of ways. And I'm sure our audience would like to follow you. Where can we find you online?

KATHRIN ZENKINA: Yeah, anywhere we type in Manifestation Babe, I will come up. So via podcast, that's Instagram, TikTok, my website, manifestationbabe.com. But I hang out the most on Instagram, at Manifestation Babe.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I'll see you there. And if they wanna connect with us, their audience at home, thanks for listening. We're on Instagram at Dr. Berlin, D-O-C-T-O-R-B-E-R-L-I-N. All right. Yeah.

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