Isabella Zar: After Birth

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IN THIS EPISODE

Isabella Zar — nutritionist and founder of a medicinal-mushroom company — returns to the podcast just nine days after giving birth to her first baby, wearing her mushroom robe and feeding her daughter as she tells the story. When Dr. Elliot Berlin, DC last spoke with her, she was 40 weeks pregnant and planning an intimate home birth. Things started the very next day: a hind leak on Tuesday night, contractions that surged all night and faded with the sunrise, and a labor that kept almost-arriving for days — nights of intensity, days of stalling, a bathtub, a peanut ball, a comb trick, curb walking, and her husband Aaron, her mom (also her doula), midwife Katie, and Bubba the Morkie holding the space. Fully dilated but exhausted, with a cervical lip and a posterior baby working against her, Isabella faced the question she'd hoped she wouldn't have to answer. In this episode: why her contractions followed the sun, the comfort measures that actually helped, the moment she knew she was out of gas — and what nine days of motherhood have already taught her about how strong she is.

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DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Come back to the important pregnancy and parenting podcast You have tuned into the after episode of a before and after birth story My guest today is a nutritionist and founder of medicinal mushroom focus company fun girl She last time we spoke to her was incredibly pregnant with her first child and now she's incredibly not pregnant with her first child

ISABELLA ZAR: Congratulations. Thank you. Thank you

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Isabella's are welcome back to the podcast

ISABELLA ZAR: Thanks for having me back

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I don't know anything about your birth story that you had a baby and I'm excited to hear all the little details of it Let's start here because I mean I always say this like when I introduce. Oh, she's really really pregnant could have the baby I know you're very at the end like

where in your timeline did things start on your like 40 42 week calendar

ISABELLA ZAR: So when we spoke I was 40 weeks I can't remember exactly like 40 weeks and how many days But things started for me. I think of the 40 week and three day mark

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Okay, so we literally were just a few days before

ISABELLA ZAR: Yeah, I think it was a day after we spoke actually when things started. Oh

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Excellent. So with the magic of podcasting, it's like the cooking shows They put it in the top oven and they immediately open in the bottom oven and it's fully cooked So your birth was that simple? So, okay, how did things start?

ISABELLA ZAR: It was so not simple. Oh, man. It was a journey I started just having little like signs and symptoms like losing a bit of my mucus plug and the Braxton Hicks were getting stronger but it was on Tuesday I woke up on Tuesday morning and I felt like I'd woken up like in a bit of like a puddle. I hadn't beat myself. Okay So I was texting my midwife. I was like, I think my water maybe just broke, but it doesn't feel like a lot I'm not sure what to expect because I haven't done this before and She was like it was probably just like probably a bit of a hind leak like see how you go throughout the day I have hind leaks all the time So I had a totally normal day I like I went and got a pedicure with my mom we went for lunch

ISABELLA ZAR: We went shopping like I had two of my good friends come over for dinner that night Like it was a normal day and like throughout the day I was still having like a little bit of cramping and the leaking was still happening

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Can I ask you a question about your mucus plug? Mm-hmm. What did it look like?

ISABELLA ZAR: It was just like well, there was a little bit of blood, but not really It was more just like clear kind of mucus looking

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Goopy

ISABELLA ZAR: Yeah a little bit. It was like clear and it looked like stringy like okay

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: So we're like, oh, did you know what it was gonna look like?

ISABELLA ZAR: I've seen pictures of various mucus from like so I don't know what to expect

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I have posters all over my bedroom Beautiful yeah, I mean it's a nature's art. Oh, yeah, I'm sure that's a really beautiful bedroom environment I'm picturing like my college dorm room Yeah, hey, what's that dude? No, you don't know more about it

ISABELLA ZAR: So I knew what it was but like it was only bits of it. You know, some people, they lose the whole thing, it seems like. I didn't have that. It was just like little bits here and there with the leaking. So it wasn't like anything was like, oh, it's go time. It was more gradual. So then my friends left our house after dinner that night and my husband and I were like, okay, my contractions are getting stronger. Like, let's just try and relax, watch a movie, had a little wine, put on a funny movie. I

was like, maybe we'll just laugh the baby out. So naive of me. Yeah. That night I was just having contractions all night and I was basically just trying to rest in between, but there's only so

ISABELLA ZAR: much rest you can get in between a contraction. It's like, Oh, I'm going to have a micro sleep

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: for like five, six, 10 minutes. Can you describe what those contractions were feeling like at

ISABELLA ZAR: that point? It was just like this band that was tightening around my lower belly, like below my belly button. It was just the surge would come on. It was like the whole band would like really constrict, like a really intense period pain and then ease after a little.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Okay. I mean, now you have your whole scale, but on a scale of one to 10, how intense would you say 10 being the most?

ISABELLA ZAR: It was probably about a five or a six. Okay. So tolerable. Like what would you do when they would happen? Yeah, it was tolerable. Like in between each contraction, I could walk around and do my thing. And then when it would come on, I'd have to stop just like brace myself. If I had a wall near me, I'd just like lean on the wall and I would just like breathe into it. They were like stopping me in my tracks. Okay. At that point, is that

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: exciting to you? Like, Ooh, this is happening or is it like unsettling because something you

ISABELLA ZAR: never really felt before? Oh, no, I felt like it was happening. I was like, I'm going to give birth tonight, this morning at some point in the next game on. Yeah, I thought it was game on. This is going all through the night. This is all night. I remember looking at the clock and it was 11 11 and my contractions were like pretty strong and regular by that point. And that happened all night. It was like that until the morning. And then it was interesting. As soon as the sun started to come up, the contractions started to settle down. So they got way longer. They became longer apart. They were like every 30 minutes now. And I was texting my midwife the whole time and she was telling me that it's quite common

ISABELLA ZAR: that that can happen. Like when the sun comes up, your hormones just relax a little

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: and the labor will slow down. It does seem somehow tied into the night day cycle. Yeah. I mean, when everybody talks about it in relation to the moon, which is nighttime, and also just at a time where you generally feel more safe and relaxed, I think. And so your body can push things forward. Not everybody, everyone's got their own pattern, but that seems to be pretty prevalent. So does that afford you the opportunity to get some rest?

ISABELLA ZAR: Yeah, I got a little bit of rest, which is really nice. My contractions are about 30 minutes apart, like most of the day. So I was getting some naps in between. But when I was lying on my side, that's when my contractions were the most intense, which is really annoying because I wanted to rest so badly. But every time I lay on my side, they were so much more intense than any other position. So what would you do? I was walking around and moving on all fours, just trying to

stay somewhat active. But then when I was trying to rest, I just had to rally

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: and get through them. Yeah. I just wonder if either like a semi reclining or sitting in one of those lazy chairs, something like that. You didn't have the option. You just powered

ISABELLA ZAR: through your intense sideline. I mean, I can't remember if I tried a semi reclining position. I'm sure I did on the couch or something, but I just remember them being more intense when I lay down. So I kind of deterred me from wanting to actually lie down. Okay. And at this point, the only presence is you and your partner. Yeah, it was just me and my husband. And also your doula assistant, Bubba the Morkie. Of course. He was there the whole time.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I mean, did he have a reaction to you being in labor? He was really chill. He was honestly

ISABELLA ZAR: such a sweet little pup that entire labor, there was a lot of it. And he was by my side, really sweet and calm, like didn't make a peep. He was an angel.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Wow. They all react so differently. It's interesting. I'm sure. Okay, so this whole thing started Tuesday night when you had a hind-leak and, you know, felt like you wet yourself and we're having little strings of mucus blood coming out and then contractions all night. And then in the morning they space out. So now it's Wednesday and they're spaced out and you're walking around being active, trying to get a little rest, anything change over the day?

ISABELLA ZAR: No, things didn't change until that night until things got dark.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, like dark outside or dark in your story.

ISABELLA ZAR: Dark outside.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, okay. Okay. Fine. I was like, that was a ominous, you know, Halloween. Okay. So I did have one question. Are you still losing fluid?

ISABELLA ZAR: Yes, I was still just having like a little bit of leakage and little bits of mucus and blood, like the whole day. Little drops of blood, not like soaking through pads of blood. No, I was definitely not like soaking anything through it. It was just like little bits here.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Okay. All right. Great. Then things get dark outside. I don't know. Let's maybe take a little break and then we're going to find out what happened after dark. We'll be right back with Isabella's are. Welcome back to the informed pregnancy podcast. We're talking to Isabella's are and labor. You thought it was going to be quick. It was not quick. I can tell already because the full day has gone by. What happens when it gets dark?

ISABELLA ZAR: Okay. So it got dark and my contractions by like 10 30 went out a minute long. So three minutes apart. So they were happening and it was still just me and my husband at this point. I really just wanted to have just a sacred space to kind of lean into the intensity without having anyone around watching waiting.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, so it's by design. It's just you guys.

ISABELLA ZAR: Yeah. Yeah. I didn't want to call anyone until I felt like I really needed them. And it was go time. So that time actually was really special. It was really nice just to have the two of us, three of us, but by one AM Thursday morning, that's when I called my mom, who's also my doula. She came over and then text my midwife, Katie, and she arrived about one 30, so we had the whole team there at that point and the pool was up. It was partially filled and we were just like all ready to go. And my. contractions was super strong, super regular. I was trying all the positions trying them for words and just trying to progress. Like I was having these regular strong contractions

ISABELLA ZAR: and I was pushing, but the baby wasn't coming down far enough. So does this mean your midwife

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: checked you already? She didn't check me. Are you just pushing on instinct? Yeah. Yeah.

ISABELLA ZAR: So she likes to go off reading the situation, like where I'm at and how my contractions are and everything that comes with that. So I was just pushing on instinct. It kind of got to the point where I was like, I feel like I need to push. Like I got that urge.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: So I was pushing into it. With the proverbial rectal pressure that everyone talks about?

ISABELLA ZAR: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Very much had that. So this is one 30 in the morning. Yeah, this

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: is one 30 on Thursday. You started the whole thing on Tuesday night. You went to Wednesday night. Oh, this is Wednesday night slash very early Thursday morning. Yes. Yes. Like 28 hours or something like that into it. Yeah. Yeah. And you said that the surges were closer together and lasting a bit longer. Were they more intense? They were more intense for sure. Same sensation just on steroids or was it like different sensation entirely?

ISABELLA ZAR: It was different in that the constricting feeling, like it felt like the surges were more of my tummy as opposed to just that lower part. Like they had spread to further my stomach. Okay. Like my whole tummy was like contracting. Okay. Because before you

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: sort of kind of belly button down now, like your whole uterus all the way up to underneath your ribs. Yeah. Yeah. But still all in the front? I had a littles in the back, but not a ton. Okay. What kind of things were you doing for comfort? I was in

ISABELLA ZAR: the tub at one stage, which felt really nice, but I felt like it was actually slowing things down for me because it felt too nice to be in there. And I just felt like it was slowing them down. So I actually, I didn't stay in the tub for long. Okay. Was that before midwife came? No, that was once midwife was there. So before that, were there any other comfort measures? I would basically, for comfort, I would hang off my husband and he would squeeze my hips. And that felt really nice. Just applying like some even pressure on my hips or even on my lower back, like around my tailbone. That helped. I also was using, doing the comb trick, which was in your hand. Yeah.

ISABELLA ZAR: So you have the little tips in like the line where your fingers in your palm meet and squeeze into that. And I actually really liked that. It just took my mind off the

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: pain happening anywhere else in my body. Yeah. Oh, that's so cool. I've heard a few people now say that. I haven't really seen it in practice, but I've heard a

ISABELLA ZAR: few people say it was very helpful. Yeah. I definitely recommend the comb trick. I mean, it's such like an easy thing to do and it definitely helps. Yeah. I do the

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: honeycomb trick. I just eat cereal with sugar. It helps. It definitely helps. All right. So those are your comfort measures. You got the comb trick. You got your partner. I am curious. Were there any mushrooms involved at any

ISABELLA ZAR: point? You know what? There were no mushrooms. I can't believe it. I couldn't stomach thing. Oh, you couldn't eat anything. It wasn't a fun

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: birth. So there's that. And then what music were you listening to? What

ISABELLA ZAR: kind of things? Oh, I had a playlist, which is really nice. It was a whole mix. I had Fleetwood Mac and I can't even think I'm blanking, but it was a nice one. It wasn't too chanty meditation music. It was a little more upbeat. It was just music that made me happy. That's great. Yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: That generally makes you happy. Yes. You're happy in the moment. I can kind of, you're setting a good scene here. Yeah, no, it was beautiful.

ISABELLA ZAR: Like the music actually was really nice because when a more upbeat song came on, I actually tried to just kind of like dance through the contractions a bit as well. It's good. I just moved my hips side to side or in circles. Yeah, it did feel good. You didn't end up sitting on the

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: toilet for a long time. Like people do. I did. I tried sitting on the toilet. I facing normal or are you facing the other way? I was facing

ISABELLA ZAR: normal. I think I tried the other way, but I didn't like it. So I

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: faced normal. Okay. But did that give you any sense of like more opening people sit on there because you're used to opening up?

ISABELLA ZAR: Honestly, not Really? No. Okay. We tried that and the birthing stool.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah.

ISABELLA ZAR: And neither of them felt like they helped a ton. One thing that we did do was the peanut ball.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh yeah.

ISABELLA ZAR: Torture hate to say it, but it was excruciating. It really.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: You're like in bed laying on your side with the peanut ball between your legs.

ISABELLA ZAR: Yeah. Katie was like, do 15 minutes each side. I did 15 minutes on one side and then about three on the other. I was like, I physically cannot. It was too much for me. It was a lot.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: So at this stage, Thursday, like early morning, we're doing all the tricks.

ISABELLA ZAR: It was just a whole night of that basically. And then same thing happened as the night before, like the sun started to come up and things slowed down a little bit, but not a ton. But Katie was basically giving me like all her midwife tricks. So I had my breast pump on walking around the house. I started taking a certain hub every 30 minutes. I'd have a dropper of this hub. I was doing the side steps. That really helped. Every time I did like the curb walking, that definitely like brought on a really strong surge, but it was just like another day of intense active labor and she still was not progressing. I wasn't progressing.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: So it kind of sounds like a much more intense version of you're stepping on the gas, the engines revving, but the gears aren't engaged. Yes, exactly. That seems frustrating.

ISABELLA ZAR: It was. I remember in the moment, well, this was a Thursday during the day. I remember just feeling so disheartened because I'd done so much work already and I was becoming really, really exhausted. I couldn't sleep. And then my husband came to me and he was like, we need to get this baby out. He's like, I'm going to help you in every way I can. And he was incredible. Like he was the best partner. I honestly like could not have gone through this without him, but he just like put a pep in my step and he was like, okay, let's do the pumps. Let's do the hubs. Let's walk around. Like he just got me doing all the things to try and bring on those contractions even stronger to get things going. Cause that's what I needed.

ISABELLA ZAR: I just like needed to like kick into another gear that I wasn't getting to. So he was just like, let's go. So that whole day, Thursday, we were doing all the tricks. And then, I mean, it went into the evening again and it was about one a.m. And I was in the bedroom at this point. I had my whole team with me and I was lying on my side. Aaron was holding up my top leg and I was pushing in that position. And I felt like I was making progress like that. And then I just wasn't, like I could reach down. Katie, she said to me, she's like, see if you can feel the baby. And I could, I could feel the baby's head with your fingers from the outside. Yeah. Yeah. I put my fingers inside of me and I could feel her in there,

ISABELLA ZAR: but she was still like two inches up. Like she wasn't quite far enough down.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Did you do that during the push?

ISABELLA ZAR: Yeah. It was during the push. She said, just put your fingers in. And then a contraction came and then I could feel.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: It seems like sometimes that gives the person a little more perspective. Like if you can feel what the baby's doing in relation to your push. OK, well, this is not the quick birth you were hoping for. I mean, it seems like you must have had to reheat the water in your tub.

ISABELLA ZAR: We definitely had to reheat the water a few times. Couple of times here. Yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Is there, I guess, two things. One is, are you still leaking fluid and stuff? Did your water break at any point?

ISABELLA ZAR: No. So I was still leaking fluid. And at this point, before I felt the baby's head, my midwife, she checked me and she could actually feel my bag, not the baby's head. So she was like, OK, your bag is still intact. Like you're leaking. It's just a hind leg. But your bag is still there. So she just kept her fingers inside of me while I was going through a few soldiers and that pressure against the fingers basically burst the bag. So she didn't intervene, but she just applied a little pressure there for it to break. OK.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: So this is after, because you said you were kind of had one leg up, you sort of felt like you're progressing, but then you weren't. This is after that?

ISABELLA ZAR: Yeah. Yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Okay. Great. So my other two things is, like, once she's in there, does she check your cervix at all?

ISABELLA ZAR: Yes. So she was checking and I was fully dilated. She could feel a little like lip of my cervix was kind of in the way. And she also felt that baby's head was posterior.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh.

ISABELLA ZAR: I know.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: The double curse, the dreaded lip and posterior baby. But were you feeling back labor?

ISABELLA ZAR: Because you had a little bit, you know, I was feeling it more in my hips, like not radiated to my back, like the back of my hips as well. But I wasn't having crazy back labor, like some women experience. It really was like more in the front.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Wow. Okay. I don't know. I'm exhausted. I'm going to take a little break. I feel defeated. All right. Let's take a little break. Obviously the baby's out. So there's more to the story. We'll be right back.

ISABELLA ZAR: Yes.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Welcome back to the Informed Pregnancy podcast. I had a bread bowl so I can hear the rest of the story here. Isabella is in labor, started on a Tuesday night with some contractions, water breaking, not water breaking, water leaking, hind-leak and bits of mucus, blood and blood. And that just continued all through the night in the morning, slowed down a little bit. Stuck up a lot, then no progress. Now we're on Thursday night? Well, Thursday night slash Friday morning. Oh my gosh. Okay. Well, you're 10 centimeters. You're trying all sorts of things to help your baby into your pelvis. And you find out two not great pieces of information. There's a cervical lip, a little piece of the cervix blocking the baby from coming

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: through and the baby's skull is against your spine, bone on bone. All right. What happens next?

ISABELLA ZAR: We are in that same position, the sideline position, because I felt like I was making the most progress like that. And I was just pushing and pushing and pushing. Like I was putting everything that I had left in my body into those pushes, but my eyes were literally starting to shut. Like I couldn't keep them open. I was so exhausted. I barely slept. I had like two slices of apple in like the past three days.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, you glutton.

ISABELLA ZAR: I was just a shell of a human. It was a lot.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Did it feel different after your water broke?

ISABELLA ZAR: It did. It felt more intense.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Okay. But not more productive.

ISABELLA ZAR: Not really. Not really. And I think it's a combination of things like the position, the cervix, but also just me being so exhausted. Like I don't think I had the energy behind the pushes that I really needed to bring her down.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Out of gas.

ISABELLA ZAR: Yeah. I was so out of gas.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I remember from the pre birth episode, you said that, you know, it took you a minute to get behind home birth and then you did. But then, you know, along the way, I think normal natural fears bubbled up about this, that, or the other thing. And then you went in fairly excited, confident with a little bit of anxiousness like everyone. But I remember you saying distinctly, which I was sort of excited about for you, that, you know, you had processed a lot and you'd come around to the fact that maybe it'll happen at home. Maybe it'll happen at the hospital. Maybe it'll happen medicated. Maybe it'll happen unmedicated. Maybe it'll happen vaginally. Maybe it'll happen with a serine. It's going to happen the way it needs to happen.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: But your wish, your goal, your desire, if you can pick anything, would just be have an intimate birth setting at home surrounded by your Morky and a few other people.

ISABELLA ZAR: Yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Are there thoughts at this point of like, maybe I should go to the hospital.

ISABELLA ZAR: Oh, my God. Yes. I was having thoughts well before this. I had moments where I was like, what am I doing? Like, why didn't I just go to the hospital and get an epidural? But they're just moments of weakness. You know, when you're going through something intense, it's only natural that those thoughts pop into your mind. But they're exactly that. They're just thoughts. So I allowed them to come in and then I allowed them to leave. And I didn't think much more about them.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Were you the only person having those thoughts?

ISABELLA ZAR: I was. And my husband, you know, when I voiced that he would remind me like that this is ultimately like what I wanted to do and that I needed to stay strong. And he was really supportive. But at this point, it's about 2 a.m. or something in the morning after, you know, laboring since Tuesday night. I just said to everyone because everyone was with me at that point. like I physically don't have it in me. And I think I need to go to the hospital. I mean, personally, I was feeling a lot of guilt and disappointment and defeat in that moment. And I could tell that everyone around me as well, like everyone wanted me to have the bath that I ultimately wanted. So there was definitely a bit of disappointment amongst the bath team.

ISABELLA ZAR: But I think everyone knew that it was the right thing, that they could see what I'd gone through and the state that I was in and that I was just physically too exhausted and mentally, and that I just needed relief and I needed to rest. So once I made that call, everyone was just like up and scrambling and getting all the things together. And Katie's on the phone to the hospital and she notified them that we were doing a home bath and that- We transferred. Yeah, exactly. So she was just getting everything lined up.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I know you live very close to the hospital. Did you have a specific doctor?

ISABELLA ZAR: No, we didn't have a specific doctor lined up, but the doctor that I ended up getting, he was amazing.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Okay. How was the drive?

ISABELLA ZAR: It was so interesting. It was a lot. I was in the front seat, facing the back, gripping my nails into the headrest. I thought I was going to puncture the holes into that thing. My husband's driving, my mom's in the back, and my midwife went in her own car. And there was just this silence in the car because it was just this intense period of trying to get somewhere. And then there was just me just going through the motions in the front, just the deep groans and the breathing. And as soon as we decided that I was going to the hospital, it was like everything unraveled. I felt like I became weak. So I couldn't stay strong for the contractions. I just felt everything the most intensely than I had.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: But also you're in a very confined space in a moving vehicle.

ISABELLA ZAR: Not ideal.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I mean, no ideal. You know, on top of everything else, it's hard to focus, concentrate, feel strong and free and open in that environment. So when you got there, how was the handoff?

ISABELLA ZAR: It was great. It was quick. They got me in there. They had to check me.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: But you knew you were 10.

ISABELLA ZAR: Yeah. I knew I was 10, but it was just protocol. They had their baseline to work from. They administered the IV really quick and then they got the epidural in. And that was all within like half an hour. It was quick, which was amazing.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: How was the epidural, both the placement and the effect?

ISABELLA ZAR: Placement was all good. There were no issues and it started to take effect within like 20 minutes. And it was just like, oh my God, everything started to ease. And I cannot tell you if it like the feeling that I was experiencing was just so much relief. I so badly needed that. I fell asleep immediately. As soon as they put me on the bed, they came out, the nurse put like three blankets straight from the dryer on me. They were so warm and toasty. I've never felt more comfortable in my life. I passed out for like six hours.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh my goodness. I can't believe there were still six hours left here.

ISABELLA ZAR: Still going.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Okay. So six hours later.

ISABELLA ZAR: Six hours later, I wake up in hospital. I wake up, I'm having contractions.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Is it Friday afternoon now?

ISABELLA ZAR: It's Friday morning. It's about 9 AM now.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: So you went in the middle of the night.

ISABELLA ZAR: Yeah. I went in about two 30, I think. Yeah. So I wake up, I'm not feeling the contractions, but I'm feeling the pressure. I didn't realize like with the epidural, you don't feel the intensity or the pain that comes with the surges, but you still feel the pressure.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Would you say it's like, you feel a muscle contracting and relaxing, like not painful, but the tightening and releasing.

ISABELLA ZAR: I guess that's what it is, but I was, I was feeling more like a pushing down kind of

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: into your pelvis.

ISABELLA ZAR: Yeah. Into my pelvis and like into my rectum as well. Like that whole area, I was just feeling like a downward pressure every time I had one.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Okay. So that was a good sign. All that pressure through the epidural.

ISABELLA ZAR: Yeah. Yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Catheter. I assume you got a catheter too.

ISABELLA ZAR: I had the catheter, but I was asleep when they did that. I didn't feel a thing.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Great.

ISABELLA ZAR: My mom said she saw them start to get it ready to put it in. And she came over and held my hand and I was just a zombie.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: You couldn't care less.

ISABELLA ZAR: I don't remember any of that. I was fully passed out.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: That's nice. Well, Isabella, this is what happens sometimes. The birth goes on for a long time and three segments doesn't do it justice. So I say we take one more little break and then find out the rest of the story. We'll be right back. Welcome back to the Informed Pregnancy Podcast. Believe it or not, we're still with Isabella. And her labor went at home for a very long time. They went to the hospital. Everything's fine, epidural, six hours of sleep. And you wake up and?

ISABELLA ZAR: And I felt like a whole new human being.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: More energy. You had energy.

ISABELLA ZAR: More energy. I felt rested. I felt strong. I felt like motivated to get this done. Yeah. So I was having the contractions and then my midwife arrived and she could see me having the contractions, but you know, they were midwife get in there.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, the hospital midwife. No, you weren't midwife. Yeah. Wait a second. How'd you get extra people in there?

ISABELLA ZAR: I don't know, but I think it's because you can have family members in there. So I had my husband and my mom. They slept on the little pullout sofa together.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And then you were able to bring your midwife.

ISABELLA ZAR: And then my midwife came the next. Yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I think they lost track because right now the protocol is you plus two.

ISABELLA ZAR: That's what I thought. But I don't know. We got an extra one.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: They probably don't. Whatever. Okay. Lucky for you. So your midwife came. She saw you having contractions, but you can see them on the monitor, too.

ISABELLA ZAR: Yes, that's what I mean. They could see them on the monitor, but they just needed to be a little closer together. Like there was too much space in between.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I'm smelling a tiny bit of potassium.

ISABELLA ZAR: Tiny bit of potassium. You're right. And honestly, that was like exactly what I needed. It just like kicked them into gear and then it was happening. And then my nurse that I had, she had the most amazing nurse. She was incredible.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Wow. So you're a great doctor who you never met before and a great nurse.

ISABELLA ZAR: I felt so lucky. Great hospital experience. Great experience.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Wow. Okay. And just to be clear, it didn't sound like you hated the hospital from the beginning. It just sounded like for birth, you were wanting a more intimate

experience, less clinical, less random people around. It's not like you were anti-hospital. You were just like, that's not my first choice.

ISABELLA ZAR: Yeah. I mean, there is totally a time and a place for the hospital. You know, all the medicines, everything that they use there. I'm definitely not against it. But yeah, as you said, it's not my first choice. I much prefer a more intimate, natural route. But at the end of the day, it's like, I just wanted my baby to arrive healthy and safe. And is for sure a part of the plan. Yeah. So, all right.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: So you get a little bit to us and things kick into gear. Finally, that second year that you were looking for things kick into gear. I'm pushing.

ISABELLA ZAR: Can you feel the pushing? Yeah. It's the same thing. I could feel the pressure. I'll tell you what was helpful is it was helpful that I'd also labored without the girl because I knew where to push the energy into. Like you have to push into your butt, basically, which doesn't feel like not intuitive. Not what you want to be doing, but that's where you're meant to push the pressure. So baby does kind of back out first and then come forward. Yeah. You have to push back first. Exactly. So I was doing that even though I couldn't entirely feel it. That's where I was directing my pushing energy. So I was doing that. I was doing that. I was pushing with my nose and then my doctor came in.

ISABELLA ZAR: He saw me go through a surge and he was like, OK, like this baby is. I mean, like, your pushing is looking great. He checked me. He could feel baby's head, but he could also feel that she had her hand up.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh no. Now you have the trifecta of blockages here. At this point, is the cervical lip gone?

ISABELLA ZAR: Yes.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Is the baby rotated into a better position?

ISABELLA ZAR: No.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: So posterior, skull against your spine and hand up by the face.

ISABELLA ZAR: Yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Dreaming.

ISABELLA ZAR: I was like, great.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: All right. Just quickly, two thoughts that pop through my head. One is what position are you in while you're pushing here?

ISABELLA ZAR: I was on my back at this point. With my back, like legs up.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Very classic hospital position. And then my other question was along the way, did anybody like think that you were gonna end up in a caesarean birth?

ISABELLA ZAR: No one mentioned the wide C-section.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Okay, so you never felt like this wasn't gonna be vaginal.

ISABELLA ZAR: No, and I knew that if this like pushing stage went on too long, that they would bring that up.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Bring it up, yeah.

ISABELLA ZAR: And I really didn't want to cause I felt like I could do it. So I was just putting everything that I had into that pushing. Like I was just like, I'm getting this baby out of me. Like through my vagina.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah, so if the baby's by the head, is there any practical advice with that?

ISABELLA ZAR: The doctor was amazing. He basically, while I was pushing, he was able to get in there and he basically just like sort of swiped her hand down from her face to her chest. So her head was able to just come out on its own.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh my goodness, wow. So he just maneuvered her a little. Oh, okay.

ISABELLA ZAR: Yeah, I mean that totally helped cause then her head started coming out and I could feel it.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Feel it with your body or feel it with your hand?

ISABELLA ZAR: Feel it with my body. I didn't feel with my hand. I was holding my knees at that point.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Did they bring the mirror?

ISABELLA ZAR: I had the mirror until the doctor arrived cause then it was structurally awkward. But I actually liked having the mirror there. It helped cause I could see things happening.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah.

ISABELLA ZAR: Yeah, it helped me.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: The visual is important.

ISABELLA ZAR: Yeah, I agree. But yeah, once I felt her head coming out, it was strange. It was like, oh, this sensation, but the sensation kept going. And I was like, oh my God, that's her head. And everyone was excited around me and starting to cry. And I was like, oh my God, it's happening. I could barely believe that it was happening myself cause I'd been going through it for so long. And then her head came out and then the doctor told me to stop and they used some oil on you

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: to help. To avoid tearing. Exactly.

ISABELLA ZAR: And then her little body, just like one more push and then she just came out.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh.

ISABELLA ZAR: Oh my God, it was the most emotional thing. My midwife, my mom, Aaron, me, I was bullying. There's the most ugly cry photos of me when she came out.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I can't wait to see those.

ISABELLA ZAR: They're not cute.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Like, Okay, it's not a cute moment.

ISABELLA ZAR: No, it's not. There's nothing cute about it. It was so emotional.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh my gosh.

ISABELLA ZAR: I just, I can feel it right now. Yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah.

ISABELLA ZAR: It was a lot. It was a lot.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: You worked hard for this one.

ISABELLA ZAR: Yeah, I know. And you know what? The entire time the baby's heart rate stayed around the 140s.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Strong like mama.

ISABELLA ZAR: I know. I was like this strong, patient baby. She wasn't distressed. And I think that's why we stayed at home as long as we did is like the baby was fine. Absolutely fine.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: You made a prediction on size. You said 7.2.

ISABELLA ZAR: Yes. And I remember you said bigger.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I said eight.

ISABELLA ZAR: She was six pounds, 14 ounces.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Dang.

ISABELLA ZAR: I know. I was surprised. I was like, I'm having a larger baby than I'd like to. I think I did. I mean, I know. I was wrong.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Wow, that's interesting because I've been doing this for almost 20 years and I never get the gender right. And I don't really get the size right either.

ISABELLA ZAR: You're so intuitive.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah, I feel it. All right. Well, I just guess in a quick moment, I would ask two questions. One is how is the postpartum? We started this and you were just feeding your baby. How's breastfeeding going? How old is the baby now?

ISABELLA ZAR: She's on day nine of life.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, wow. Okay.

ISABELLA ZAR: Yeah. Breastfeeding has been great. Honestly, she latched really quickly in the hospital. I went through a couple of days, like day three and four, like my nipples are definitely sore. My midwife also happens to be a lactation consultant. She's huge on lactation. So nice. Cause she helped me with any issues. She was like, send me photos. I sent her the closeups of my nipples and all the things. And she'd give me all the tips and helped me a lot. But yeah, breastfeeding has been great. Feeding on demand. She eats a lot. She's a happy baby. She's already like seven pounds, eight ounces.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, wow. Still not my predicted birth weight, but still.

ISABELLA ZAR: He's getting up there.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: So my final two questions. One is what, if anything, did you learn about you, about your partner, about life from the experience?

ISABELLA ZAR: I am like so much stronger than I ever thought I could be. I came out of this whole experience feeling so empowered and just honestly feeling like I could do anything. Like nothing phases me right now. I went through a really intense few days and I saw a side of myself that I didn't know I had. It's very animalistic. Like it just comes out. You're like this mama bear and you'll do and go through anything to get your baby here. And then same for my husband was just a literal angel. Like I could not love him more. Like having him just as he is, he's such a good human and was there for me and was not grossed out by anything. Like he was down, like in the action, like wanted to be there. It just allowed me to fully lean into it

ISABELLA ZAR: and open up and be myself and not feel awkward. There was just no shame or judgment or anything like that. So it was, yeah, it was really special. Definitely.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Really beautiful, very cool, very cool. You said mama bear and it reminded me of when you said koala bear in one of our sessions. And I was like, oh koala bear. And you're like, yeah, I don't know if you realize but they're kind of mean and most of them have chlamydia.

ISABELLA ZAR: Yeah, it's true.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah, it's cute. But mean, and I was like, wait a second. First of all, I had no idea. Like not good for tourism. I'm just gonna say right now. But also I was trying to put that trio together because it sounds so familiar. And then I remembered it's all the girls from high school, so cute, but they could be so mean to me. And I'm sure some of them have chlamydia. I'm sure of it. We're sure. I guess the last big old question is maybe too soon, nine days afterwards. On round two, would you do anything different?

ISABELLA ZAR: Round two, I'm for sure gonna go for a home bath again, round two. I'm not scared of the experience. I know it's gonna go differently. I think what I'll do differently is, I don't know, maybe I'll just like watch my positioning throughout my pregnancy. Like maybe I was, I don't know. It's funny. We always like to like take the blame on ourselves and her position was her position, but was I sitting

too much? Was I slumping too much? Like that comes to my mind. Like maybe I should have done more spinning babies or whatever. I don't know. I really felt like I was doing as much as I could throughout my pregnancy, but no.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: There's like a million things about that. You definitely from day one, the first time that you have the athletic pelvis, you have very strong musculature that was also quite tight. It takes time for babies to push through that. Even if you're at 10 centimeters, even if your cervix is open, just takes time for your baby, a lot more time to push through that than someone who is not strong or not tight or weakened not tight. Those babies come out, you know, easier. If your baby's not a hundred percent lined up with the runway, which clearly at points wasn't, then it's a lot more effort to maneuver through than somebody else. So, I mean, it's not extremely surprising. The good news I can tell you is this,

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: when I've seen this exact scenario in the past, around two-tenths ago, a heck of a lot easier. So, I guess you have to have a baby so we can do a follow-up podcast and see if I'm at least right about that.

ISABELLA ZAR: You're gonna have to wait a little while.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Fine, I give you three months. Isabella, you're an amazing person. I just noticed all the mushrooms on whatever it is that you're wearing there.

ISABELLA ZAR: My mushroom robe.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Your mushroom robe, and that's a reminder of fun girl mushrooms. You're a mushroom fanatic and eat and live and breathe the medicinal power of mushrooms and you put them into your cool products. Where can we find you online?

ISABELLA ZAR: You can find me at fun girl on Instagram, Facebook. You can find all the mushroom things there.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Amazing. Can we find a mushroom robe there?

ISABELLA ZAR: Unfortunately not.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Not yet.

ISABELLA ZAR: No, not yet. Maybe in the pipeline.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: See what I did there. Okay, we will find you there online. And if you're looking for us online, we're at the Instagram is gonna be Dr.Berlindi, O-C-T-O-R-B-E-R-L-I-N. But we are literally going live right now with our new streaming. platform and informed pregnancy plus, which you can find at informedpregnancy.tv. And this week we're going to do a video version of your birth story. The one thing I now can't wait to see is the little pictures of you all weepy, tears of joy.

ISABELLA ZAR: They're so ugly.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Ugly sweater pictures. And that was going to be at again informedpregnancy.tv.

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