Christina Perri: Part 1

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IN THIS EPISODE

In Part One of her three-part series, singer-songwriter Christina Perri sits down with Dr. Elliot Berlin, DC — nine months pregnant and due any day — and starts at the beginning. She goes back to a big Italian family and a barbershop childhood in Philadelphia, a first tattoo at 15, and the songs she wrote in secret because music was the one place her sadness made sense. How did a waitress who never planned to perform end up hearing her own song on national television — and watching her life change in three days? Christina is candid about the messy years that followed her teens, the surrender of getting sober at 23, and why she believes her career only became possible once she did. Then comes Paul: a missed connection, eleven asks, a City Hall wedding, and a first baby whose textbook birth gave way to a postpartum season that hit like waves. What did she learn about asking for help — and what was quietly beginning as the family settled into a 200-year-old house in Montclair and looked ahead to 2020?

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

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Welcome to the Informed Pregnancy and Parenting podcast. I'm your host, pregnancy-focused chiropractor, Dr. Elliott Berlin. My guest today is a multi-platinum singer, songwriter, and a mother. Since the beginning of her career in 2010, she has released three pop albums, two lullaby albums and toured the world many times. Her most popular songs are Jar of Hearts, A Thousand Years, and Human, which have billions of streams and Diamond, Platinum and Gold awards. In 2017, she settled down and got married to Paul Costabile. And in 2018, they welcomed their first baby, a daughter named Camilla. In 2020, they had a daughter named Rosie, who was born silent. She's currently nine months pregnant with another daughter and due next week.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Christina Berry, welcome to the podcast.

CHRISTINA PERRI: Hello.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Wow, a million things to talk about. I'm going to jump right in. Where are you from originally?

CHRISTINA PERRI: Born and raised in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: What was that like?

CHRISTINA PERRI: You know, it was really sweet, actually. I had a really nice childhood as far as I don't know. It was just that generation of like we didn't know we didn't have money. You know, we were just like kids running around in the neighborhood coming home when the streetlights came on. Like we are so millennial. Like my brother and I and and like we just sort of have this memory of, you know, having a good time and getting into trouble. What we thought was trouble, but it really wasn't that bad. And like my dad's from Italy, so we have a massive family. He has eight siblings. I have 50 cousins.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Are they here?

CHRISTINA PERRI: They're here. Yeah. I actually have 100 family members in Italy and 25 in Brazil. Well, so three siblings stayed in Italy and kept their family there. And then the other six siblings came to America. So, yeah, my family's huge. So all I knew was, you know, family dinners, homemade wine, running around and growing up in a barbershop. Like so so cliche, almost like a caricature, like, you know, all the Italian men speaking Italian and like me sweeping hair off the floor. Like, you know, it kind of was really nice. I can turn it and like emotionally look at things that weren't great. And I have for 28 years in therapy. But like, that's my brain and my perspective of it, but sort of zoomed out. It was really nice. I love Philly.

CHRISTINA PERRI: I still go back all the time. And funny enough, I should say Philly loves me, which is kind of hard to do.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: What do you mean? It's hard to do.

CHRISTINA PERRI: Oh, Philly fans in general are like, oh, they're tough. And they won't even care me saying that, like they like literally will just like reject someone so fast like Santa Claus, like at a parade. They'll like throw, you know, like snowballs at him. And, you know, like we're known for that in Philly. So I feel like when I became sort of popular, my music became popular. I would play shows in Philly and they're the first shows to sell out. And like, I'm really grateful for the town. They play my music. They support me. I've been sponsored by Wawa at one point, like they birthed you. Yeah. And I also like speak really highly of them. I think that helps, you know, it's worth the Eagles in the Phillies and, you know,

CHRISTINA PERRI: all those things I'm supposed to do. And so, yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: From the heart, though, can I ask you a question, when did you get your first tattoo?

CHRISTINA PERRI: Oh, my gosh, I was 15. The truth is, my big brother got one first. So I blame every single one of my tattoos on him because I feel like I wouldn't maybe have gone down this road. Like if he didn't make it look so cool as my big brother, he's two years older than me. And he got a tattoo on his 15th birthday. And so naturally the day I turned 15, I thought it was like my birthright. And then I remember it was on the back of my neck. It's like an Egyptian onk. Not sure why I'm not into

anything really Egyptian other than that, I guess. And it was very emo at the time. I was 15. I had fallen in love for the first time. I had written my first song and I thought I felt alive like for the first time in my life.

CHRISTINA PERRI: Like, wow, I'm still that dramatic, by the way, and I got it and I hit it from my family. I want to say for like a good month and then I have to share my story. Now that I'm a mom, like I actually think this is kind of brilliant, even though maybe I wouldn't tell my daughter Carmela to do this, but like I told my mom when we were in church, my family's Catholic. And so on a Sunday, I'm like wearing a turtleneck in August. My mom's like, what is your deal? Like, I know you're weird in general, but you're wearing a turtleneck. And I was like, oh, my gosh, this is my opportunity to tell her. And then by the time we get out of church, like she's just going to like be less upset. Like she has to like pray about it, you know, or whatever.

CHRISTINA PERRI: And it worked. I really think my punishment was less because I told her I was like, I have to tell you something. And I leaned over and I whispered it to her. And by the time we got out of mass, like I was only punished for like three months, maybe instead of like, oh, wow. Yeah. I thought that was quite brilliant.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: But yeah, she wouldn't be incredibly surprised since your brother had already gone down that path. Yeah.

CHRISTINA PERRI: I don't know. She was like, well, cause she didn't take either one of us. My aunt pretended to be our mom. And so she was super bummed and she was sort of just like, just please don't get your hands or your neck or your face. And I was like, okay. And so like, I have a 16 on my hands and my neck, but just not my face.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Not your face.

CHRISTINA PERRI: So one of the three and Ben, I thought that was pretty good.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: First of all, as people get addicted to them, are you still craving the next one?

CHRISTINA PERRI: You know what? No, because I like learned how unhealthy they are. Oh, well, because I got really obsessed with my health in the past five years and I learned that they're like, you know, like metal, like I'm like all of a sudden thinking like, and I don't mean now they make them without metal and you know, in the ink, but I don't know about in like the late nineties. And like, I wonder if like, it was just a season of my life where, you know, I needed them and loved them. And like right now, like I can't, like, I'll probably get something for my upcoming daughter. Cause I have one for Carmella and I have one for Rosie, but like, I'm not planning like big pieces where I'm just like, going to be covered. I feel like I'm waning, waning down.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Do you have one or two that are most meaningful to you?

CHRISTINA PERRI: Um, yes. Well, I probably have a couple that I really, really love. This is how I look at it. Like, would I get it again? Cause there's so many, I would not get again, like the cheeseburger. It's just like unnecessary, like, and if you ask tattoo people, they'll say, if they're

tattooed like me, like refrigerator magnets is what we sort of call my style, you know, like portraits and beautiful like symmetry. Most people would like not get the same thing again, but the way I look at it is if I would, then obviously that means something to me. So I have a Disney castle here that interestingly enough, like brings me a lot of joy every time I see it. So like, I'd probably get that again. I also have a giant Millennium Falcon on my leg.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, yes. Cool. And I have, that was one of the coolest ones I've ever seen.

CHRISTINA PERRI: Thank you. I have my daughter, Rosie here on my heart. My husband has it too. I'd get that again, obviously. But, um, yeah, it's interesting. They all tell stories, like even the cheeseburger, I guess, but like there's something about it. Like I used to say, you know, I express myself in three ways as a writer, a singer, you know, and I get tattoos, like it's just part of my creative expression. And I also like have a belief about our bodies being so finite and like how this is just the one I'm in, you know, for right now. And like, I could just decorate it. Yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I don't have any, but I think if I had a burger on my arm, I would probably be even less healthy than I am now, although I think your son

CHRISTINA PERRI: would probably like my cheeseburger.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: My son would like it. Yeah. Don't give him any ideas, but I would just look at it and be like, okay, we're going to get burgers now.

CHRISTINA PERRI: Well, to be fair. I did go on a burger, like mission, like a finding the greatest burger in the world, and that is the tattoo in honor of that sort of like quest I went on. And interestingly enough, the second best burger in the whole world, in my opinion, is in Berlin and Germany. Look at that. I know we're so connected. I know, I really do love cheeseburgers. So as much as I made fun of that one immediately, like I do really like cheeseburgers.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: So, yeah, I started this episode by saying, there's so much to cover, let's jump in. And then I diverted and spent a whole map of your body of art. Okay. Music. How'd you get into music?

CHRISTINA PERRI: Oh my gosh. Well, this one. try to keep on the shorter side because I do think you know obviously the journey of motherhood is maybe more well I think it's cooler but I have a pretty fantastic story I'm not gonna lie and you know people that do know my music sometimes know my story also because it's so special but I'll give it a brief summary definitely sang my whole life did musical theater and things like that but was very very shy like never planned performances or like you know brought my guitar parties and said like hey look at me and like sang songs for all my friends like people would beg me to do that actually like some of my closest friends and I just thought when I started writing

CHRISTINA PERRI: music I was about 15 like I said I had fallen in love and had been studying the Beatles for like two years before I like actually picked up the guitar and like wrote music or sat at the piano I taught myself both those instruments and well and not very good though like in the music world we call it like songwriter guitar and songwriter piano yeah but that's anyway it's a different kind

of talent than like whatever pianist but uh well what I do like about it is that it was so imperative that I was expressive through music that I found the chords do you know what I mean like it's like my brother one time came he's a very talented guitar player and classically trained and played with Les Paul and like I mean he's like a virtuoso

CHRISTINA PERRI: from the age of like seven and so I also think I didn't show anyone because I was like not him do you know what I mean he was the star of our family and sweetest human on earth but anyway one time he came home from touring the world because he had a record deal by 16 and I was like hey look what I can do and I showed him like me playing the guitar and I was like what chord is this and he was like that's a b minor and I was like ah like I really didn't know like I truly put my fingers in places until they sounded good like it was like so kind of cute that's incredible really thank you but I definitely started building a catalog at like 15 and like I said I didn't perform I just was like

CHRISTINA PERRI: expressing myself almost like a diary like I joke about being dramatic and emo but like I was really depressed like even as a kid like I remember my mom being like I don't know why you're so sad like I was like I don't know either like I think I just had depression and anxiety I was in therapy by eight because my parents were just like so not sure why I was like the way I was and music really saved me I'm not gonna lie it was like my form of expression it was obviously like I wrote love songs because I love the Beatles but like I really think it got me through like really emotional hard experiences from 15 to 23 before anyone really heard my music it was like really just for me and truthfully really helpful and so

CHRISTINA PERRI: long story long I uh went to LA on my 21st birthday only because my big brother asked me to definitely wouldn't have again Mr. Influencer in my life with the tattoos and the music so he said hey Chris can you come to LA and I was like sure and so I moved to LA with nothing just a guitar I had maybe like 300 bucks it was just like so out of a movie he went on tour I stayed at his apartment for like three months he said get a job get yourself an apartment you have like three months to do that I did that the whole while I'm here I'm thinking oh I want to be a songwriter you know at this point I had realized I had written songs I thought were really good but like I didn't want to perform them and so in this town I thought

CHRISTINA PERRI: like oh I heard there was a job where you could write songs for other people and so I was a waitress by day like three different waitressing jobs just to pay my rent and then I would write songs at night time like that was sort of it and then I had this best friend her name's Kelty she's like my fairy godmother in the story or in the Disney movie her and I would be like standing looking over Capitol records and like a shooting star goes by and she said you know Christina you really need a manager someone who like believes in you and knows people she's like I don't know anybody she was a dancer like a New York City rocket she was like I don't know anyone in the music world but like I'll manage you but

CHRISTINA PERRI: I don't know anyone and I was like okay and I was so like not into being the performer but she was like my only fan and she thought I should be and I just kind of listened to her and she posted a video of me singing on her YouTube and now this is in 2010 when YouTube was like not really a thing it was certainly not like viral you know what I mean it wasn't like like there was like MySpace and then YouTube but like no one watched my videos but Kelty like the truth is like I

had no views but by chance she tweeted a YouTube video of me singing a song and her dancing like contemporary dancing you know really like emotional she was just as emo as me and I guess the right person this kid an intern in North Carolina saw the video

CHRISTINA PERRI: happened to follow Kelty sent it to his friend Tom his friend Tom was looking for a new artist to sign went through my YouTube and like saw covers because I did post covers on YouTube but for fun because it wasn't like a business it was not an influencer you know what I mean like that didn't really exist and he reached out to me and said hey I'm a manager. I manage this guy named Jason Mraz, who happened to be my favorite artist of all time. And I was like screaming. I mean, me and Kelsey both were like literally like two little girls screaming. She took a picture of me reading the email. I should have that picture somewhere of me like crying, like reading this email, like, oh my gosh, like this is it. Like, it felt like my big break.

CHRISTINA PERRI: But I also thought like, not for me. I thought this was my, you know, for me to have a manager and then write songs for other people. Like I was really not like expecting to be like the artist. But I thought this was my way in, like my door. And then cut to same best friend, Kelty sends a song. I made a demo. So Tom had started managing me, but like unofficially. I made some demos, sent one to Kelty said, hey, this is a song called Jar of Hearts. Like I'm so excited. I've never heard myself sing like with myself. Like I'd never recorded four part harmony. I was like, how cool is this? You know, but like, this is the demo I'm gonna shop around to other artists, you know? And she just like immediately emailed it

CHRISTINA PERRI: to the choreographer on the dance show. So you think you can dance, which is funny. Cause originally Kelty's like, I don't know anybody, but like she knew the one person in the world I needed to know for like my journey. And so she gave this song to Stacy Tukey who happened to be very successful at the time on this show and said like, hey, maybe one day you can play this song on your show. And Stacy said, how about Wednesday? And that was 8 p.m. June 30th, 2010. They played a minute and a half of Jar of Hearts and went all the way to the top of the charts on iTunes, flew to New York city the next day, quit my job as a waitress. Three times. Slated on CBS morning show. So You Think You Can Dance, I performed it.

CHRISTINA PERRI: And then Jay Leno, like in three days I performed it on TV three times. And like, you know, as they say in show business, the rest is history. I mean, I literally like, that was it. And I have to tell you though, in all honesty, until I wrote A Thousand Years, which then came a year later, I really didn't think it was me still. I thought like this was a fluke, you know, the imposter syndrome that people get. I was like, they're gonna find out like I'm not really a performer, but there was something charming about being so nervous and shy and I would just talk about it. Like all of a sudden I realized my superpower was like, I don't know what I'm doing. And everyone's like, oh my God. You know, like, so I was like trying to get out,

CHRISTINA PERRI: like back out slowly from the spotlight and everyone instead loved me like more. And I was like the whole time, like it's in my head. I mean, I would say like, it's not me, it's my music. I'm glad it's doing what it's doing. That's really cool. Like I never felt like I was the star of the movie. And then like, I wrote A Thousand Years and I finally, I remember having a moment like, okay, I think it's supposed to be me. At this point I can't fight the universe or you know, the forces that like are

choosing me to be this vessel, right? Cause like that song just like blew up in a way that's so much bigger than me became, you know, everyone's love song or grief song or like whatever. And I'm so, so grateful for it. And I let go at that point.

CHRISTINA PERRI: I was like, okay, this is what I'm supposed to do. And then here I am.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I have two things to say. First of all, what do you call-

CHRISTINA PERRI: That's sort of breath too. You know, I'm very pregnant.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah, I'll give you a little space here. What do you call a fake noodle?

CHRISTINA PERRI: Foodle.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, that's not bad. Impasta.

CHRISTINA PERRI: Oh, this is very Italian.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah. You were with your imposter syndrome.

CHRISTINA PERRI: Exactly how I felt. I felt like a big bacon noodle. Cause I still do. I'm not gonna lie. I haven't mastered it in any way, but.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, one day you'll see you're the real deal.

CHRISTINA PERRI: Thank you.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I think we should take a little break and then talk about your second career. Third, I guess there was Waitress, now Popstar and then Motherhood. Wow, that can be a mother. We'll be right back with Christina Perry. Welcome back to the informed pregnancy podcast. We are talking to Christina Perry. Okay. So your career accidentally explodes and then you settle down and get married. How

CHRISTINA PERRI: did you meet your hubby? So it's very cute and quite nauseating. We met actually at the end of the first day of my second album promo. And I remember it very specifically because it was like a 14 hour press day. I had the today show at 4 a.m. And then I walked into I heart radio at some point in the evening. Like it was my last thing of the day, which I think is important or worth noting because I was very, what they would say, like punch drunk. I was just silly at that point. I was like delirious really. And so I was myself entirely, which I will say most of the time I am, but sometimes I'm a little bit more professional or a little bit more like, I don't know, structured with like what I'm saying or doing.

CHRISTINA PERRI: And at this point, I was just like so silly. Like you can see we have the whole thing on video. I walk into this green screen room and there's this like handsome Italian man in a suit. And I'm already just like nervous and silly. And I'm talking about barfing. Like I'm just like, like it is like like a sitcom or something. Like if I look back now, I'm like, how did I say that? You know, like this was our first date. But apparently it was charming. And so he says that he fell in love with me that day. He actually has an email he wrote to his mom as proof that says, hey, mom, I just interviewed the girl I'm going to marry. Wow. So that's very cute. I was a little slower.

CHRISTINA PERRI: I will say I've asked my manager, Hey, did I like show any signs or mention anything about like, you know, just trying to match his like romance with Paul and my manager, Tom was like, Oh, I'm sorry. You don't remember fake fainting into the car. Like when we were leaving and I was like, Oh, that sounds like me. I was like, okay, I've made some sort of like notion that I had, you know, fallen for him because the truth is we didn't go on a date for two years. So like that was day one of my promo cycle. And you know, the music world is going to be very intense. Well, I think pre pandemic and also pre family at this time. I'm single. I have no kids. I'm on a plane every day. And so yeah, for two

CHRISTINA PERRI: whole years, we became friends. I mean, you know, it's actually kind of cute. I followed him on Facebook, like my secret personal Facebook. And he was like, she loves me. Like these were signs apparently, but you know, I hate to tell, like we laugh about it still, but like, you know, Facebook suggests people, you know what I mean? Like it suggested like, Hey, do you know this guy? And I was like, Oh yeah, the guy from my heart. Like Paul's reading into it that like, you know, I'm pining over him and whatever. Maybe I was, maybe I just like, didn't totally realize until he, you know, asked me out like 11 times. And like the 11th time I was finally like, okay, you know, I'm in New York

CHRISTINA PERRI: finally. Cause the truth is we just were never really in the same place. And when he would be in LA, I would be somewhere else. So I promised him, Hey, when I come to New York next, I will go out with you. And I'm a promise keeper. That's the thing. Like that's what got me. It was my accountability. Cause I remember thinking like, Oh crap, I told this guy, like I would hang out with them. You know what I mean? Like I felt the need to keep my promise. And we've been together ever since that was January 20th of 2016. So that was our first date went to Broadway show though. Just see school of rock. Oh, cool. It was very cute. Well, Atlantic records gave me tickets to Hamilton. If I would go to school of rock

CHRISTINA PERRI: and like tweet about it. And I was like, absolutely. I saw the original cast to Hamilton, but I didn't bring Paul. Unfortunately I brought Paul to the other show. Makes sense. I didn't know him yet. I was like, I don't know if I can bring you to Hamilton. It's the hottest ticket. And that's fun. You didn't make that promise. Right. So anyway, we felt really in love and Paul always jokes around and says, I was ready to have a baby the day we met. Like I brought it up like at our first date and I could have, I might have, I was already 29, you know, Italian, huge Italian family. He's Italian. He's got a huge Italian family. I was like, this is it. This is my guy. I was like, let's go. Like

CHRISTINA PERRI: what are we waiting for? You know, I was like, so I was like CEOing our relationship a little too much, you know, but I was like, I was just ready. I wanted so, so badly to be a mom. Even my OB-GYN would be like, I would go for checkups and I would just like cry. She'd be like, your uterus looks perfect. And I would just cry. I'm like, what's happening to my face? She's like, if you're ready, you know, my baby fever was like, just clicked on. And luckily Paul's was kind of too. I mean, he's my age and he's like super dad and I knew he would be, you know, you just like kind of see your partner in a way, like, you know, especially when you're that age, I think you're kind of like looking for that.

CHRISTINA PERRI: So like, I just was so excited to start a family. And so we got married first, but we didn't, we just got pregnant.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: But did you have a wedding now since then?

CHRISTINA PERRI: No, we got married at city hall in New York city. We did get married, but one month before she came. I was this many pregnancy and, uh, at city hall with like our two best friends. And we had a big thing with our families, but it was funny because it's like the opposite of what you would imagine as like a big Italian kind of like wedding. But I was just, I dunno, our families were so Catholic. They just needed us to be married. Do you know what I mean?

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, before the baby came.

CHRISTINA PERRI: Yeah. We kind of got a little pressured into it, but check the box.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah. I like, I'm happy with our, I mean, I was all geared up to ask you if they played a thousand years at your wedding and it was on the courtroom steps. So, you know what?

CHRISTINA PERRI: It's not too late. We joke around about maybe having a wedding, like, you know, at 10 years or something, like with our kids and like doing a whole thing. And then, yeah, I guess I bet you at that point, I would consider it. Maybe I'd have like my friends play. It'd be really funny. We can karaoke it.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, that would be even better. Okay. I want to get into that pregnancy and birth, but what keeps swirling through my head is how you struggled with anxiety and depression as a young adult through, it sounds like your tweens and your teens and your early womanhood and how music, I guess, was a very powerful tool for you in conquering that, taking charge of your mind and being in control of that rather than letting it control you. And as a human, I think we all have some anxiousness and depression, some sadness, sometimes more than others and sometimes better controlled than the others. But also as a dad, as a parent watching, you know, my teens, I have like basically four teenagers now and the things that they struggle with

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: sometimes, anxiousness, fear about different things, sadness, and to know that it's possible, you know, to watch you and see, Hey, it's possible to find yourself, get control and not have those things ruin your life. It's kind of nice. It feels warm inside. It's reassuring. I don't know, just to look at you as an example and say, look, this can be done is comforting to me.

CHRISTINA PERRI: So I want to say one point on that. And I love that you paused here and added that in because it plays such a huge role in the next five years of my life. So if we're like shooting through my life in its entirety, it's so worth mentioning that I started therapy at eight. So like, I do want to just add in like the tools that allowed me to get well. So if I started therapy from eight, I really did stick with it until I was about 17. And then I have to say that I got really into drugs and alcohol, which I am not proud of, but I also will say that in some ways it just helped me exist and get to the place where I got sober, like a lot of people who get sober will say like, I'm actually quite grateful that I had something

CHRISTINA PERRI: that helped me get to the next level. Like I was so sad. Like music was so helpful and the best and then college and that time that was really difficult, but at least like I felt so, I'm grateful that I didn't overdo it, but at the same time, I'm mostly grateful that I got out of it, but I will say, I can't lie and not say there was like a scary couple years from 17 to 23, where I was a bit messy and I'm sure my parents didn't sleep very good. Do you know what I mean? Yeah, that's the truth. But I did have music and my family and I had therapy. I still went, but I was a little bit lost and then the gift of sobriety, which I have to call it that because it really does feel like, like, I know so many people that want so badly

CHRISTINA PERRI: to be sober and can't get sober or can't stay sober. So I would like to think that the surrender of it all and like choosing to get sober at 23 for me really did save my life too. And it was just the next thing I needed, you know? So in that journey and I kept going to therapy, but getting sober for me was a huge, huge thing because then I was present for my career. So my career actually happened after I got sober, which was my true self, my true essence, my true, right? Like when people are cleared of substances, like that's just like their most genuine soul, I think. And so like, it's interesting that that's when my dreams started coming true. That's when I started like touring the whole world.

CHRISTINA PERRI: Now I was, or I struggled with depression and anxiety on tour and. and bad relationships and all those things, but like I really, really also did a lot of work. Like I did the 12 steps, I had a sponsor, I had sponsors, which I think is also worth noting because I think that's like full circle sobriety. And I was really spiritual, I did a lot of praying and meditating, and then gosh, I had no clue what it was preparing me for. As soon as I became a mom, the transformation that occurred, chemically, emotionally, spiritually, mentally, physically, like it was so fundamentally shifting. I'm so grateful for everything I had been through and everything that like I didn't even realize I was sort of like prepping for. But I did wanna just mention,

CHRISTINA PERRI: yes, thank you for noticing. It's been a mental health journey and a health journey like the whole time. And I did always like really, really care about mental health and like putting that first. I'm really grateful for that. I am, in a way, an example of like putting in the work and being okay.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah, you know, a sometimes sleepless dad of teenage kids, it's just helpful to just sometimes take a deep breath and relax and see that sometimes it's part of the process and you be supportive and helpful as much as you can and let the process work its way through. But I'm comforted by looking at you and seeing that if someone puts in the work and someone wants it enough, then they can come through the other side and have benefited from that whole journey and then their parents can sleep a little better.

CHRISTINA PERRI: My gosh, well, I'll call you when Carmel is a teenager.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Thanks, I'll give it right back to you. Okay, and the other thing that made that so clear in my head was just how when you met Mr. Wright, you were just ready to jump into motherhood, which is sometimes when, you know, if you haven't really resolved those issues, it's scary to jump into that role, but you did it.

CHRISTINA PERRI: Thank you, well, I will say just very specifically, I did trauma work, I did EMDR trauma work six months before I went on my first date with Paul. And I will tell you, if I had not done that, I don't know if we'd be here because I had a break from touring. So I was on tour, I did 19 tours in a row and was on tour for six years straight. And like that alone was like a little bit traumatizing, but wonderful. And then when I got home, I was single, just to be really honest, and I finally focused on me. And then I was like, wow, I have a lot of trauma just from being a woman in the world and going through things as teenagers and during when I wasn't sober, there were so many things I had to go through and work through and I actually did that.

CHRISTINA PERRI: And I remember telling my therapist like, hey, I feel worse, like I'm mad at the man at 7-Eleven and I don't even know him, you know? And she was like, trust the process, trust the process. And then boom, I literally went on my first date with Paul and I was like, oh my gosh, I'm ready for you. But I have to point out, I really like almost prepped for that and didn't know it, you know?

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah, hard.

CHRISTINA PERRI: Yeah, yeah, yeah. But I like was never, I think ready in any other relationship I ever had. So it is really cool that by the time I met like the right person, I really felt like, you know.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: In the right place.

CHRISTINA PERRI: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Very cool. So you guys did have a baby kind of right away?

CHRISTINA PERRI: Mm-hmm. Yeah, within a year. So we dated a year and then I was pregnant by the spring of 2017. And at this point, I had moved to New York City for him, by the way. I was living in LA for about 10 years and then he was like my New Yorker guy. And I thought, oh, I'll just move to New York. I'm so in love. Like it was just like, I've always wanted to live in New York City. I don't know why I'm putting on like some holiday. I felt like I just was like in the clouds. You know what I mean? Like, oh, let me just leave the place I've lived for 10 years with all my friends and like my favorite people. Because I find it interesting that like I circle back and now we live in LA again. But like at the time I was just so in love

CHRISTINA PERRI: and I was just like, you know, took the whole year off. Like it didn't tour. I was just like in La La Land literally, but not LA. And so moved to New York City just to be in love. Just to, I don't know, live out this like movie. Ended up getting pregnant, moving in to like a, you know, a high rise in New York City. I felt like Rapunzel, the top of a tower. So nauseous. My pregnancy was like, I'd never been pregnant before. What's funny too is like, it was definitely not planned. So when I got pregnant, I didn't know I was pregnant, right? For the first couple of weeks. And I remember, well, Paul tells a story that one day I woke up and I ordered a cake for breakfast. Like on Postmates, I ordered a Lady M cake

CHRISTINA PERRI: from the Upper East Side or whatever. And I ate the whole cake. And he was like, are you all right? And I was like, yeah, I think. Like days later, we found out I was pregnant, but I'm going to have to pee on a stick because I might be pregnant. If that's the yeah, so funny was and

you said it wasn't planned, but were you trying to not get pregnant and it failed or you just not the most careful. Were you the most careful and honestly, like since then, I've been the same way with all my other pregnancies, like I think I count wrong.

CHRISTINA PERRI: I don't think I'm very good at like figuring out when I'm ovulating. And I truly mean it was an accident. Like I certainly wouldn't have tricked Paul into having a baby, but I guess we were just not being careful. We weren't trying, but we were trying, but we weren't trying. Like that's what some people say there was no goalie.

CHRISTINA PERRI: Yeah, no, no, no, we didn't have that. And then, you know, we were just so in love. I mean, I honestly think it was like, I can't recall when it may have even happened. I don't know what happened. And we're so excited and happy. And like, even his family was happy for us, like the very Catholic family that he's from. And then, you know, that point, the, when he getting married questions would come up every day. But I remember it being a time of like, cute.

CHRISTINA PERRI: But I remember it being a time of like curiosity, like nothing about pregnancy, like scared me. I had no physical complications. I had a great doctor. I would go on my appointments. Everything was normal. I was super sick. Like I said, like I felt like Rapunzel in my tower. Like I would just watch Disney movies all day and nauseous and like eating crackers and crying. You know, that's how emotional and dramatic I am. So that felt kind of normal. And I don't know, it was just like a really kind of nice memory. Like truthfully,

CHRISTINA PERRI: I didn't know how good I had it. If I'm being honest, like because of my next three pregnancies, I thought they were all like this, you know what I mean? Like I didn't have any experience before. So I just kind of rode through it. And we got married in December of 2017 on the day we met in the same green screen room. It was very cute. And then we had Carmella on January 17th of 2018. Really great birth experience also have to say like, it was in a hospital at Lenoxville hospital. And I like, didn't regret any of the things that happened. I didn't have a traumatic experience. I know so many women have traumatic birth experiences. Uh, my water didn't break, but I labored at home.

CHRISTINA PERRI: Like I knew I went into labor and I was able to like be at home until like four centimeters and then went to the hospital and I had an epidural slept a little bit. Woke up at 10 centimeters, pushed her out and she's perfect. I mean, pretty textbook, right? I only say that and not in a humble break sort of way, but in a comparison to then what came next, like, you know what I mean? Like it was so,

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: but did you have any vision or plan or idea of how you wanted the birth to go or just go with the flow?

CHRISTINA PERRI: I was actually pretty specific because I read all the blogs. I, at this point I was on all the apps. You know, I definitely was very first time mom where like I did so much research and I would even protect myself emotionally and say, I'm going to stay in the trimester. I'm in, I'm not going to read ahead. And like, I didn't make a birth plan because everyone I know said, don't, they said like, have an idea of what like you maybe want or don't want, but then you have to just like be open.

CHRISTINA PERRI: And so like, no, I kind of just always even really great. I didn't have a doula. I had Paul and he had me. He literally brought salami and mozzarella in my placenta cooler and was eating it with my OBGYN like in the hospital room while I'm like bouncing and laboring on the ball. And like they're eating like, you know, and mozzarella. And I'm like, you know, I didn't hate him. Like, you know, especially the journey of like loving and hating your partner through this whole thing is like so intense.

CHRISTINA PERRI: I mean, I hated him like two days later, but even that moment was cute. Do you know what I mean? Like, and like, maybe I'm just romanticizing it a bit, like as remembering it almost five years ago. But yeah, we're also again, comparing it to what the next pregnancies were like. And it just seems like I would take that one any day. You know what I mean? Like,

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah. Well, we're gonna get into your next pregnancies in a minute. I'm curious what postpartum was like for you from that first verse.

CHRISTINA PERRI: That was much harder. That one I sort of hit the ground because real life stepped in a little bit where it was flu season in New York City and Paul's whole family got it one by one instead of all at the same time. So all of a sudden, our plan of having mother-in-law and Paul's three sisters helping us was out the window, everyone was sick. And my dad had open heart surgery, emergency open heart surgery, a week before I had Carmela. So my mom couldn't come to be.

CHRISTINA PERRI: I will say like, everything was like, perfect, maybe until then until we got home. And then Paul and I had to sort of figure it out on our own, which for a couple reasons, you know, I look back now at a little bit nostalgically, because I can't believe we made it through that, like, I almost wonder if we're still married. Like, we worked so hard on us not breaking up after that. Do you know what I mean? Like, it was so hard when it was just the two of us in New York in the winter, everyone was sick and we had no idea what we were doing. You know what I mean? And like, then he annoyed me every single thing he did and every sound he made and, you know, like in every way he'd held the baby and he did everything wrong.

CHRISTINA PERRI: He knocked off her belly button too soon. I cried for four days. You know what I mean? Like, that was more like realistic, but I will also say I wrote a song about postpartum depression called Mothers, which I'm really proud of because I even had like the conscious thought, this is insane, like how I feel right now. And because I'm so sober, I think sometimes I have the ability to like really know like something is like chemical because like there's nothing else in my system. So when I would get waves of postpartum, which by the way, the language of that really helped me because at first I thought postpartum depression was something you just get and then you have it and that's who you are. And that's like, you know what I mean?

CHRISTINA PERRI: We're kind of taught to be very scared of that. All the books and things I read always said like have a code word or a safe word and like, you know, it's a little bit scary how we talk about it. And then all of a sudden I decided to put my own filter on it and was like, okay, what if they're more like waves? What if I imagine they're just chemical, right? They're my body regulating, they're my hormones regulating at one point, my hair all fell out here and here for months. And that's when I had like a real dip and I was like, well, that makes sense. I'm having physical symptoms. I started to like do what I do, which is like make a formula and understand it. Like that's kind of how my brain

works. Like I need to like understand.

CHRISTINA PERRI: So once I sort of allowed the feelings to come, allowed the waves to come, talked through all of them, worked with my therapist, my sponsor, also got a doula, like a postpartum doula. I hired this woman, Marta. She was a Polish woman in New York City who I will love absolutely forever. And she would come over and make me soup. And she would wake up with Carmel in the middle of the night and feed her. I would pump, cause I was also like so terrified of like supplementing with formula, which I now have a whole other opinion on, but at like, you know, 31 years old, reading all these like crunchy mom things, they were all like saying, don't do that. So I was trying so hard to pump exclusively or breastfeed her exclusively.

CHRISTINA PERRI: And that just made me not sleep for 13 weeks. I was like, the whole thing was just sort of challenging, totally challenging. I will not say in any capacity that that was smooth, but we did make it through it. I mean, honestly, Paul and I learned together, we had to learn to get through it as a team. We also then started asking for help. I would ask for help way sooner now. I would never go 13 weeks without sleeping and not ask for help, but sort of how you have to learn. And that was that. I feel like the first year of Carmel's life was challenging, but also, oh my gosh, she was the best baby. She was just the best. She still is the best kid, but she was so good. And I only say that because I know my mother-in-law

CHRISTINA PERRI: who has five was like, she's so good. Like, you don't know who you are, she's so good. And so I think that really helped. And I think Carmel and me and Paul, we began our bond that would become the most important thing. So I almost look at it like maybe it was all meant to be that it was just the three of us, because we ended up going through so many hard things, just the three of us. And so it's interesting now to look back at it and have fumbled through that so ungracefully, truthfully, it was quite messy. And then I was able to, again, write songs about it, because that's how I heal. I was able to write songs that help other mothers heal, which is a new version of my life. I think that song I get the most people write to me

CHRISTINA PERRI: about that song, like the most moms, because it's just like, how wild is this fourth trimester? It was insane, but something we all go through. That's the beauty of it. So yeah, we made it through. And then we made the worst choice of our whole lives, which was to move to New Jersey.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, so you're gonna have Philadelphia fans, but I don't know about New Jersey.

CHRISTINA PERRI: I know, I don't wanna talk trash about New Jersey, but for what comes next, the choice to move to Montclair, which is where we moved to this 200-year-old house. I feel like now that it's been four years, I have to forgive myself, Paul, our families who loved the house, our realtor, the town itself. I always said I'll never go back to Montclair if you paid me. And I have to forgive it. I have to, because I don't wanna carry it, but like I had no idea what we were walking into.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Let's get into that in just a moment. As we go into this next commercial break, I am thinking a few things. One is you mentioned EMDR, which... is a very powerful trauma processing tool, and it stands for eye movement, desensitization, and reprocessing. And it's one of

the forms. My wife is a perinatal psychologist, so she does a lot of work before and after having a baby for individuals and for couples, and EMDR for processing trauma, another one called somatic experiencing, SE, also very powerful. There are some great tools available post-trauma, any kind of trauma, sometimes trauma that has to be reprocessed before becoming a mom, and then sometimes afterwards. And then you mentioned postpartum struggles

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: with mental health, which is extremely common. And so Alyssa and I did a podcast together. It's the only one where it's just the two of us, and her name is Dr. Alyssa Berlin, and the episode is called Preparing for Healthy Postpartum Transition. And it's a powerful episode to listen to for people who have not yet had the first baby, or every time you add another one, things change also. And so it's a good refresher there. And of course, she has a program called the After Birth Plan, just because of the experience that you went through and how common it is, and how she was seeing people fall into the same exact pitfalls over and over and over again. And she can only work with so many people directly face-to-face,

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: so she made it into an online program that people can do from anywhere at any time, and it's called theafterbirthplan.com. On that note, with your permission, we'll go into this break with a few bars from your song, Others, and we'll be right back.

CHRISTINA PERRI: To the mothers who aren't sleeping that are having trouble feeding Too afraid to say they're not okay No, not at all To the mothers who feel empty That aren't sure they're even ready To be alone and responsible For somebody so small To the mothers who are lost Pulled underneath the waves Who need to cry for help But are drowning in their shame To the mothers who are falling And don't even make a sound Who don't know that they're broken Until they hit the ground This one's for you I've been there too I've been there too

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Welcome back to the Informed Pregnancy podcast we're talking to, Christina Perry. Okay, well, Montclair, let's just start there. What made you choose to move there, and what happened when you got there?

CHRISTINA PERRI: Okay, so I would like to make a tiny disclaimer and just say, you know, this is just my experience and my opinion, I'm not a doctor, and a lot of the things that happen in the next couple years of my story are up for interpretation, I have to say, because a lot of it I can't prove, but I just wanted to say that because everybody has a different experience for sure, and I wanna respect that. So, okay, when I moved to Montclair with Paul and Carmella, we were very excited to have, I wanna say just sort of like a life for Carmella that Paul and I had, we lived in the suburbs right outside of a city, he lived right outside New York and I lived right outside Philadelphia, and we just imagined, you know,

CHRISTINA PERRI: having a big house for our big Italian family to come and visit, which they did constantly. We had a pool, I mean, it was like such a cute town. I mean, I look back now and some of my friends in LA were like, you know, are you done pretending that you're like a totally normal person? Because I was on tour for so long that I wanted the exact opposite. I wanted to like go grocery shopping and I wanted to, you know, just like enjoy my family and feel like I wasn't constantly being a performer. Honestly, I was not sure I was gonna go back to performing. After I became a mom, I was like so obsessed with being a mom and then I made a lullaby album for Carmella, which

by the way, was like one of the best things I ever did. I'm so glad I did that.

CHRISTINA PERRI: And I remember my record label being like, wait, what? You know, you're making music for babies now? Like they were not super into it. And now I know they are because like there's streaming numbers and whatever, whatever, but it was so authentic. It was like, no, I'm a mom now. It changed me from the inside. I absolutely love being a mom and like, I wanna, you know, record the songs I actually sing for Carmella. And so, you know, life was looking pretty good at that point where I was making music for her. And then I was also writing new songs based on just like the. new version of me and I was proud of the new songs I was writing, which would then be my third album. But this was four and a half years ago now. So it started like a long

CHRISTINA PERRI: time ago. And everyone knows it took me like a long time to put out my third album, which I have just put out.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Congratulations.

CHRISTINA PERRI: Thank you. Some of the songs were birthed at this time. Like it really was like a pleasant time in our lives, which, you know, in the movie of my life, like would really fool the audience because that is how we felt. We just felt like, you know, we had arrived. You know, there's also some like weird cultural thing in America that's like, you know, you get married, you have the baby, you buy a house and like life is good. And that's like the goal. And then what's interesting is like, but was there a white picket fence? No stone fence. It was a beautiful house, honestly, but maybe that was the missing. I think obviously, but anyway, so, you know, I only say that because I want to

CHRISTINA PERRI: also debunk that that's like a necessary road to take, because in my mind, it was the opposite of my reality, which was on tour. And what's funny is people would probably want the life I had before that life. You know, people think being famous is really cool. People think, you know, touring the world is glamorous and amazing, you know, but really it's like 4am and you're like crying in a bathtub. You know, this is life, right? It's all perspective, but it's all everyone thinks the other side or the other thing, or if I would just get to this, I'll be happy. If I just get this, I'll be complete. And like, I'm just setting it up here to say, really had all the things checked off the list and lived near our

CHRISTINA PERRI: parents. I mean, all of it. And slowly and invisibly, I was becoming very, very sick. Well, the truth is, I don't know if you can tell from this podcast or just for me in general, but like, I don't miss many things. I'm like so observant. I'm so obsessed with my health. I've been, you know, sober at this point, like maybe seven years. And I'm like, you know, all of a sudden I'm having just like odd symptoms, like colds and flus like that. But like, you know, all of a sudden I go to my OB GYN, and like, I need thyroid medication, because my thyroid numbers are weird. And I'm like, Okay, well,

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: is that something that you went in because you felt a change or just on a regular

CHRISTINA PERRI: checkup? Yep. I'm gonna be really honest in the fact that none of the medical issues that started to occur set me off with red flags, none of them. And that I'm so I regret deeply, because I wish I noticed. But the truth is, even someone like me, who is like really, really aware can absolutely not notice. And so I want to cut to November of 2019. So that's a year we're living in

Montclair, but I'm traveling, I'm doing Nashville songwriting sessions, and Paul's working in New York City, and Carmela's thriving. And we have a nanny who travels with us. And now I'm working on my third album. And life is good. I'm just writing songs in LA, New York, Nashville, LA, New York, Nashville, never really consistently in our house

CHRISTINA PERRI: for too, too long. But that was our hub, right? So New Jersey is now our hub. So we go to LA for one of our many trips in 2019. And I have what I think is food poisoning, but it turns out I'm pregnant. And so I find out like two weeks before Thanksgiving, we're in LA, and we are over the moon, because actually, we really wanted that, right? We really wanted Carmela was a year and a half. And it's kind of all I wanted, like, it was always the plan. It was definitely just like, we were trying, but we weren't like obsessively trying, but we were just like, so ready. And it was funny, because I kept saying to people jokingly, oh, whatever comes next, I'll do whether it's a baby or an album, like, I just really wanted another baby. So I get

CHRISTINA PERRI: pregnant, we go home, tell our families on Thanksgiving. And, you know, there's this image that I always imagine, like, if I write a book, like putting it in the first page, because we went to Disney World for the week between Christmas and New Year's, me, Paul, Carmela, and Paul's little sister Mary, who at the time was like 17, like really little sister, but wonderful. Zia to Carmela, and we're in Disney, and it's New Year's Eve, and we're looking at the fireworks, and someone took a photo of us from behind. And it's like Paul with his arm around me, me holding Carmela, and there's a baby in my belly, and we're watching the fireworks. And it's 2019 going into 2020. And we are thinking, this is going to be the best year. Oh, my

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Okay, right. Are you visibly pregnant at that point? You just know you're pregnant?

CHRISTINA PERRI: No, no, I'm about nine weeks.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Okay, so very early in the pregnancy.

CHRISTINA PERRI: Yeah, early pregnancy. We only told our families we haven't announced it yet publicly.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Christina, just on that point, we have a lot more to talk about. And I feel like that image going to 2020 is where we should stop this episode.

CHRISTINA PERRI: Oh, okay. I love that.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And start part two of your before birth story. Cause there is a lot going on. Okay.

CHRISTINA PERRI: That's a great buildup and a great place to stop because it is the beginning of the next chapter of my life. Okay.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Well, just to end this episode, let me thank you for joining us. I only met you not that long ago and I feel like I know you forever. We're both intense introverts and I love that about you.

CHRISTINA PERRI: Farming introverts. I must say you wouldn't know maybe that we wouldn't know. You wouldn't know.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: No. And I do, I feel like I know you for a long time and what you're about to talk about is pretty intense and courageous and I know you're doing it to help other people and I know you're already helping other people and it's going to go a lot farther. So before we go there, let me just ask you this question. Where can we find you online?

CHRISTINA PERRI: Wow. All the places, Christina Perry.com. Actually, if you go to my Instagram, there's a little link. Now they make a thing where like you don't need websites anymore. It's like one of those link tree things where the thing I'm up to or have updated in the last year is like on this little page. So it's kind of like that link in my bio feels like the new website. And so yeah, from Instagram, you can find me everywhere.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Okay. And is it just Christina Perry?

CHRISTINA PERRI: Very creative. Yeah, I'm glad they had it available. Sometimes I don't, you know, no, the New Year's week, Christina Perry, two eight, six B or underscore, you know, yes.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: We're like us Dr. Berlin, but it's D O C T O R B E R L A N. Okay. Let's go to a new episode. And also we're going to do other interesting stuff together. So that will likewise, if you just go to add Dr. Berlin and Instagram, you'll be able to click on my link tree and see all the stuff that's not as important as your stuff, but still kind of cool. All right, we'll be back.

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