Ciara Whaley: After Birth

Episode 350 · May 15, 2023 · with Ciara Whaley

IN THIS EPISODE

Ciara Whaley returns to the podcast holding her baby daughter, joining Dr. Elliot Berlin, DC to tell the rest of the story. Her water broke at 41 weeks and one day — a whole puddle on the bathroom floor — but no contractions followed, so after two non-stress tests (the second fueled by a boatload of candy) she turned to the castor oil smoothie plan, twice. Labor kicked in Friday evening with back pain that never took a break between surges, a doula who arrived just in time, a mother-in-law who quietly joined the birth team, and a birth tub that was lukewarm, too shallow, and nothing like the relief she had pictured. Thirty minutes of pushing later, her daughter shot out into the water — and the back pain was gone instantly.

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 am your host, pregnancy-focused chiropractor, Dr. Elliott Berlin. My guest today works in the film industry as a costume designer, and the last time we talked to her, she was super pregnant and expecting her first baby with plans for a home birth. Right now, she's holding that baby. So sweet. Congratulations, Ciara Waley. Welcome to the podcast.

CIARA WHALEY: Thank you so much. This is kind of surreal, sitting here with this extra guest.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Well, you were both there the first time, but it's different now. All right. So last time we talked, you were planning for this birth, and it took a minute to get there to the pregnancy. In fact, if I remember you said you had a conversation with your husband, you're like, yeah, if we don't get pregnant, that'll be okay, too. My, how things have changed.

CIARA WHALEY: Oh, my gosh. Now that she's here, it feels like she's always been here, and I couldn't really imagine it without her. It's nuts to say.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I literally cannot picture life before my kids, really before marriage, but also just an insanely new plane before the kids. Okay, you are the sort of person that kind of wanted

to do things in your own space, at your own pace. You saw your little sister being born at the hospital, but the hospital scared you per se. You wanted your own area. You wanted to do it your way. So the plan was, as we talked last time, that who would be with you, supporting you in birth, would be your husband, your mom, your midwife, and doula, and just the girl dog, not the boy dog. And then it sounded like you were open, like whatever the journey takes is where you're going to go. Caller me curious, but how did this all start? How did labor begin?

CIARA WHALEY: Man, well, I went over my due date and I actually saw you after my due date, and my water ended up breaking at 41 weeks in one day. I didn't have any contractions.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh yeah, I was wondering, were there any signs before that that things were getting closer?

CIARA WHALEY: No signs except the swelling. I felt like all the pregnancy symptoms that you usually hear about that suck hit me that last week, like from 40 weeks to 41 weeks. My hands were tight. I couldn't fit any more of my shoes or my slip-ons.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah, I mean, at least better at 41 weeks than 21 weeks.

CIARA WHALEY: Seriously, I had no complaints at that point. But yeah, it ended up breaking. I was in the bathroom. I stood up and I was like, oh, this is different. This is a puddle at my feet here. And I'm still kind of delusional. So I called my husband up like, is this what I think it is? Go get the strip. Go get the amniotic fluid test strip that our midwife told us about. I mean a puddle though, not just like a little, not just a but a whole puddle. It was a whole puddle. I thought it would be like a balloon popping and a whole explosion down the leg. So I'm like, oh, this was pretty tame. And he kept trying to call the midwife. He's like, let's just call her and get her input.

CIARA WHALEY: And I'm like, no, I don't want to be that client that freaks out over anything. Look, let's just test it first and see what it is.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Ah, so I guess the test showed what it was.

CIARA WHALEY: Well, we couldn't figure out what the test was supposed to do. So we had to call her.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, okay. Inconclusive. What time of day was that?

CIARA WHALEY: It was in the evening, like around 8 p.m.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Okay. And were you excited?

CIARA WHALEY: I was super excited. My mom had already come in town. She was downstairs cleaning and cooking in the kitchen. And we called my sister-in-law to come get the boy dog because we felt like it would happen pretty soon. We let the midwife know and we kind of went to bed really happy. I knew at that moment, like, man, this might be the last good sleep I get for a long time. But I didn't really know what that meant.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: But were you getting good sleep before that?

CIARA WHALEY: I was definitely resting. I'll say that.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Okay. Resting counts for something.

CIARA WHALEY: I was getting good sleep. It wasn't in the most comfortable positions, but you know, I was able to kind of doze off and get a good nap in.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I'll have a good nap. So then you call the midwife and?

CIARA WHALEY: And she had saw me earlier that day. she said since there's no contractions you're fine to keep doing what you're doing let me know if anything changes and she recommended I get a non-stress test in the morning just since I was after my 40-week date. Had you done a non-stress test yet? I had not and that should be called the stress test because it's stressful. It is it is so she says just keep doing what you're doing and it's night time so do you go to bed? We went to bed you know in the hypnobirthing classes you learn that sometimes labor can happen at night when you're comfortable and it's dark so I kind of snuggled in bed like oh this could be the moment and woke up and nothing had

CIARA WHALEY: happened. Oh woke up when? The next morning. Oh so you got a real night's sleep. I got a real night's sleep. The birds were chirping. I enlisted my mom to come do the non-stress test with me and it was super stressful I will say that. She was in a period of rest and so she didn't have the exact moment that the doctor wanted but I knew it was the time that she's usually quiet so I wasn't too concerned and I had a couple pieces of candy but not enough so I had to come back the next day just to make sure everything was good again. Oh wow I always

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: feel like when I have a couple pieces of candy that it's not enough. Let me tell you the next

CIARA WHALEY: day I went back I was loaded. I had starburst, skittles, twizzlers. I was like no we're gonna wake her up. I wanted to do everything that I could and not have to give birth in a hospital.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: So this is now the next day so now your water's broken for over a day? Yes it was broken for over a day. And still no contractions? Still no contractions but everything did look good. Non-stress does look good. Okay cool and then what advice are you getting if any?

CIARA WHALEY: My midwife's plan our last resort was always going to be a castor oil smoothie if my water hadn't broken so we sort of stuck with that plan but moved it up a couple days.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh because you were past your due date so you're saying if nothing had happened by close to your 42 week mark you had the castor smoothie contingent plan so now that your water had broken but no contractions you went for the smoothie? Oh my gosh I thought it would be way more delicious. It sounds like a milkshake with a little castor oil. Bad I have no idea what castor oil tastes like. That's a good thing. Oh yeah whenever I think of castor I think of that motor oil. It might as well be. Might as well be. I guess you could put the rest in your car. Don't. Okay so you have the smoothie and I also thought with like strawberry and other yummy stuff in there it could overpower but no anything change after the smoothie?

CIARA WHALEY: I started feeling mild contractions nothing to kickstart nothing to make me uncomfortable so I went around the block did curbs walk with my husband kind of just being the pregnant person in the neighborhood got a couple honks a couple sympathy from some moms who said oh I feel sorry for you but you got this um and nothing happened and so the plan was to take another smoothie after like three hours. Oh same flavor? I switched it up. What'd you put in this one? This time I put a little bit of everything the first one just had vanilla ice cream with castor oil this one I put you know peanut butter banana strawberry I was really trying to tone out that flavor. Did you hide it better? It did. Okay now we know you've

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: done some market research on the castor smoothie now also people often say that after they drink castor oil that they get irritable digestion was that something you experienced? I definitely

CIARA WHALEY: felt like I needed to relieve myself in the restroom and that's sort of where I kept finding myself but nothing would come out in my case it just felt like everything in the inside was

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: working its way down. Oh so just like the sensation but nothing really okay. Exactly.

CIARA WHALEY: And then on the contraction front? It definitely started kicking in they started kicking in probably 20 minutes after having that second dose of smoothie. Oh really and not just the delicious flavor but also more effective. Way more effective it wasn't okay I was able to talk through them you know I was trying to do my hair before everything went down I was downstairs with my mom and my mother-in-law sort of hijacked the scenery. Really was your mother-in-law was she supposed to be there was that part of the place? She was not we're close but still she's not someone I thought would be there we let her know we would call her when things got near since she lived so close nearby

CIARA WHALEY: but she had a bag packed that whole week in her car and she sort of just came over and took my mom shopping throughout the day but I knew it was her plan to kind of stick it out with us.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And did she stay?

CIARA WHALEY: She did.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, interesting. So you had two mamas at your birth and then three mamas at the end. OK, so 20 minutes after your smoothie, are you also, just out of curiosity, doing other things to try to get the ball rolling?

CIARA WHALEY: No, nothing besides walking the curb walks I had done earlier that day, walking up and down my stairs. That's about all I did to get the ball rolling.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And were you concerned with the time going by that, not that it would be the end of the world, you're not afraid of the hospital, but that you weren't going to be able to have the birth of your choice, the setting of your choice, home birth?

CIARA WHALEY: I wasn't. I kind of didn't let that sit with me at all. I knew I had a really experienced birth team. And so that comforted me a lot. And I was sort of in the text chat with the hypno-birthing moms that I had the class with. And I was like the fourth mom to give birth. So I had all this experience just from the knowledge that they shared with me. Some of them had long labors, where their water had broke a couple of days before. So I wasn't worried. I knew it could still happen.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Ah, okay. Well, after your contractions start to kick in, do they become pattern-like?

CIARA WHALEY: They did instantly. Even though I was able to talk through them, they were pretty strong and consistent. They started about every four minutes and then kind of stayed there for a while. And that's when the back pain kicked in.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Before the back pain, what did the surges feel like? And also how did they feel compared to what you might've thought they would feel like?

CIARA WHALEY: Let's see. They definitely were like menstrual cramps times 10. I was able to sort of rock myself through them, but I really had to remember to breathe. And I started to wonder like, is breath work really gonna help?

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, are your cramps, generally your menstrual cramps, like would you consider them mild, medium or intense?

CIARA WHALEY: You know what, when I was younger, they were pretty intense. But now that I'm older, in my mid-30s, I'd say they're pretty mild now. So I say it's like a times 10 of my mild.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Okay, okay, fine. This is good. And just for keeping the timeline, this is nighttime.

CIARA WHALEY: Well, this is now evening. So when I took the castor oil smoothie, it was about 2.30 p.m. the day after. Sorry, I'm losing track of my days. So my water broke on a Wednesday night and I went into labor on Friday.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Right, so Thursday morning, you went for a non-stress test. Friday morning, you went for a non-stress test with a boatload of candy. Friday morning, you take a strawberry ice cream smoothie, blah, and then around 2.30, the cool peanut butter and kitchen sink, whatever you have in the pantry smoothie, tasted better, starts kicking in. And now it's Friday, early evening and you're contracting four minutes apart and it's starting to move into your back. I think that's an excellent place to take a break. When we come back, we'll find out what happens next. Welcome back. We're talking to Sierra. Okay, so we just did a recap right before the break and things are starting to pick up. What happens next?

CIARA WHALEY: So now it's about, what, three hours later? Around 5.30 or so.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Is this three hours after your second smoothie?

CIARA WHALEY: Yes, exactly. Okay, 5.30 p.m. And that's when the back sort of kicked in and that. when it was sort of, oh no, it was just me on the toilet and my husband right next to me on the birthing

ball. Like, what do you need? Do you need something? Should I call the doula? Should I call the midwife? And me, I think I have a high pain tolerance. So the whole time I'm just like, nah, we got this. Like, let's just handle it ourselves.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: First of all, you definitely have a high pain tolerance, but also you have like a high mind tolerance, I think. Like, you're really able to compartmentalize what's going on in there and stay focused on your path, which is, I'm hashtag jealous, is the truth, but also inspired by you. Okay, so when you say it's in your back, in your lower back?

CIARA WHALEY: It was in the lower back. It felt horrible.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Was it with the surge or even between surges?

CIARA WHALEY: It was even between surges. It was sort of consistent. It definitely intensified as labor progressed. But at this time, three hours later, after the second smoothie, it was still pretty mild, but it was happening in between the surges. And that's something I wasn't prepared for. When you don't get that break, that's definitely much harder. So I know you plowed forward without calling the A-Team. Are the moms still there? The moms are still there. They stay downstairs. Our bedrooms are upstairs. They really did respect our privacy and boundaries. I sort of gave my mom a talk beforehand. Like you may hear some things, but don't worry. Like my husband has this. And she did really good.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Okay. So are you doing anything to try to alleviate the back pain?

CIARA WHALEY: I'm on the birth ball. I'm walking with my husband. I laid down in bed with the peanut ball, just trying to get in different comfortable positions because I knew I had to save my energy. So I was really just trying to sleep.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: That's the second time those peanuts came in handy. All right. Are those things helping with the pain or just helping you cope with the pain?

CIARA WHALEY: It's helping me cope with the pain. My husband's helping me cope with the pain. He's reminding me to breathe through everything, go to my happy place. And finally, I don't even remember the time now. It had to be around 9 p.m. He's on the phone with our midwife and she hears me in the background and she's like, these are sort of close apart. Like, why haven't you called the doula yet? And he's like, you know, we just figured we can make this work ourselves. And she's like, no, you need to call her now. Call the doula. Okay. Call the doula.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: It sounds like you don't know exactly, but they move closer than four minutes apart.

CIARA WHALEY: Yes, they did. It had to be around 9 p.m. I think the doula arrived like after 10 p.m. She showed up just on time.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Okay. We'll find out what that means in a second. But during the surges, are you quiet? Are you vocal? Are you?

CIARA WHALEY: I'd say I'm definitely vocal, more so just breathing through it like you would a tough workout class. Like when your Pilates instructor makes you hold that pose a little longer than you want to. That's the first second. I'm definitely breathing through it. I'm sort of in my head a little. I'm not yet in labor land. I'm sort of like, is this really labor happening? Like, are we doing this now? And my husband's still cracking jokes. He's like, oh, this is, you know, contraction one out of 8062 more that we have to go. I'm still kind of laughing. You know, we're in that phase, even though it's painful.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah, I always find that if you're able to, you're in the right mind frame. Laughing is helpful, especially since they always say relax your jaw, relax your jaw. And when you laugh, you can't really help it. You kind of have to relax your jaw. So sometimes I think people, when I was doing a lot of birth work, people would want me there for my hands. And then sometimes I'm like for the jokes. And so I'd get nervous when I got the phone call. I'm like, hold on, I got to write some material on the way over to the birth. All right. So 10 o'clock, your doula gets there. And you said just in time.

CIARA WHALEY: Just in time. Up until she got there, I was really using music as a way to kind of sing through the most painful moments. But by the time she got there, I needed someone to sort of be in my face, reminding me to calm down, like my husband, like they count with me, do this kind of thing. And I also needed somebody to give me counter pressure on my lower back. So as soon as she came, it was beyond the point of he couldn't do both.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah. Yeah. And also, I mean, it sounds like you were in it for a bit and your contractions were fairly frequent. So sometimes it's nice to just have fresh energy. So yeah, one supporter can rest for a minute while the other one gives you their full effort and tacking a little bit. Okay. So is the counter pressure helpful?

CIARA WHALEY: It's super helpful. I'm so grateful she's there. She's doing these light rubbed on the back and it's feeling amazing. And then there is a point in time where her and my husband switched and she's now having me walk around because she knew that the back pain I was was really the baby descending. And she's like, you know, you're gonna feel this pain. And so she comes down past this point. So she was really trying to get me to move. And now my husband's on my back giving me counter pressure, but he's just not doing it right.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Experience counts for something. There you go. Okay, so I know you said that you were going to set up a tub. But you're not necessarily picturing the tub as part of your birth or your delivery. Did you set up the tub?

CIARA WHALEY: The midwife set up the tub with her team once they got there.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Okay, how much later after this doula rubdown does the midwife?

CIARA WHALEY: You know what? I feel like she came three hours later or so. Okay, maybe a little more.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And was that because you were ready for her? Did the doula suggest maybe now's a good time or something?

CIARA WHALEY: The doula handled it. She sort of has seen enough births where she knew by my movements and my sounds when to call the midwife over. And where the baby was, she still had some time to descend. And there was a point where I had like a huge amount of bloody show in my diaper that I was so graciously walking around the house in. And that's when she knew like, Okay, she's close. Now I can call the midwife.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Okay. And do you remember how long it took for the midwife to get there?

CIARA WHALEY: I don't. At that point, I was just like, I was in a different world. I want to say when she called the midwife, the doula was having me rest in my bedroom with a peanut ball in between my legs. And that just intensified the pains that I was feeling. And it was at that point where, you know, she would let me rest for a little bit, then she would have me walk around the room. And this is embarrassing to say, but I bit my husband at one point, like I was a wild dog.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I have a question for you, because I feel like you're a person that might be able to tap back into this. I have two questions for you. In terms of your mind, do you feel like you were at this point birthing mostly from a place of conscious mind, or unconscious mind, like the hardwired programming, or somewhere in between? And or hormonally, do you feel like you are more under the influence of oxytocin, the love, bonding, and birth and orgasm hormone, or more under the influence of adrenaline, like the fear, fight or flight hormone?

CIARA WHALEY: Let's see. I definitely at this point was in my conscious mind, the doula was having me step in and out of the shower to see if that would relieve my back pain. Because at this point, it was sort of just unbearable. And I wasn't able to breathe through it like I thought I would be able to. And I would get out the shower and I would put on deodorant. And I heard her tell my husband like, is she putting on deodorant right now? But you know, I use this natural salt deodorant, and you have to put it on every time because it's gonna creep up. Yeah, it's none of the artificial stuff. Right. So that's how I knew I was still kind of me in a way. I was still kind of conscious of like, the doula and everything she was doing. And I would say thank

CIARA WHALEY: you here and there. Like I'm hosting a party. The adrenaline didn't kick in yet. It definitely kicked in later. Once I got in the pool. I'll say that.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Okay, so I guess what really happens next is the midwife comes. And when she arrives, what's kind of among the first things that she does?

CIARA WHALEY: She arrives with her assistant and her student midwife, and they instantly go and set up the tub.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: You got a party. Lots of people. Okay, so they set up the tub. Would she just listen to you or did any like vitals check or cervix check or anything like that?

CIARA WHALEY: No cervix check. She checked my blood pressure, I think at that point when she came. I was definitely in labor land when she arrived. And I really didn't know what was happening. I just knew I felt the tub should have been filled hours ago. And I was like, Oh, my God. I was just in the state of adrenaline, panic and fear, which I was surprised that I felt I was really looking for a way out

of this back pain.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah. Again, with no breaks. That's kind of intense. Okay. Did you get in the tub once it was full?

CIARA WHALEY: Once it was fully I did get in the tub. I also was GBS positive. So I opted for antibiotics. So that's something that she was coming over to administer. You know, that's a whole other thing. Her trying to put the IV in my hand when all I want to do is like submerge my

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: whole body into the water. Yeah. Yeah. Okay, so some people do get a lot of relief in the tub from the back pain. Was it helpful for you?

CIARA WHALEY: Not at all. I don't really know. I love my water scalding hot and I had been in the shower with my doula with you know, no cold water at all. And then you get in this tub and it's sort of lukewarm. And I'm just like, What is this?

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Uh, not good for you.

CIARA WHALEY: No, and it wasn't high enough. You know, I felt like I wanted more water in there.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Wait, so, oh, did you stay or just pop right out?

CIARA WHALEY: Oh, no, no, I stayed in there. I mean, it was definitely comfortable. It was just, I was feeling all these feelings and it felt nice to be in water. I do love being in water, but it definitely didn't take away any pain that I was feeling.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: All right. Well, I feel like things are about to happen. So I hope things are about to happen for your sake. I mean, they happened. Let's take a little break and when we come back, we'll get the rest of the story. We are talking to Ciara and here we are with the third segment. So things are really intense for you. The tub does not take away any of your pain. You're getting your antibiotics for your grippy strap and laboring along. And from what you said, uh, kind of like under the influence of adrenaline and intensity and not relaxing into things as you thought you might.

CIARA WHALEY: Definitely. And I don't think it was outwardly shown. I was definitely keeping it within, but my husband knew, and he was just like, come on, breathe through it. The doula was reminding me to breathe into it. I was super confident in my midwife also. And so having them all around, I knew I was in good hands, but I was also secretly wondering like, who's going to come and take this baby out of me. There's no way I kept trying to look at the midwife. Like, does she know what I'm thinking? Like, can she just reach her hand in there?

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: You didn't have any service checks at this point. Is that your choice? Um, okay.

CIARA WHALEY: So once I got in the tub, she did do a cervix check, but I can't remember if I started pushing or not from what I remember, I started wanting to push as soon as I got in the tub and the baby didn't come out right away, obviously, so that's when she did the check and she's like, I bet you her head is right there. She just knew from the sounds I was making where the baby was, and she was pretty confident in the whole process. And by the time she did do the check, she's like, her

head is right there, Sierra, like you got this. And I pushed a couple of different positions. They were trying to help me figure out the best one. I had asked my husband to get in the tub with me at that point. He was supporting my back.

CIARA WHALEY: He's still, it's like 12 hours of him just punching my back at this point. Yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And now he's here like squatting stool. I remember you saying you didn't really picture yourself being in the tub for birth that seems to have changed.

CIARA WHALEY: Oh yeah, it changed, honestly, because once I got in, I didn't know how I was going to get out. The pain was just too much. I was like, no, she has to come out now. Like this is it. This is the finale.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: How was pushing for you?

CIARA WHALEY: Well, pushing from what, you know, the data is was only 30 minutes of pushing, but it felt forever.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah, I'm sure. I'm sure. I mean, honestly, 30 seems great, but I can see why it would feel forever. Was it relieving at all?

CIARA WHALEY: For me, it was not relieving. I've heard this before that it feels like you are taking, you know, a poop. It felt like I had to take the biggest poop I ever needed to take in my life. And I knew I didn't have to, like I knew it was a baby. And my doula had told us in our class, like, you know, you'd have to push into the butt. The baby has to pass the rectum area. And I was just looking at her and she's reminding me all my sayings and my affirmations. I'm like holding onto her hands at this point, like pulling her in the water with me and I'm just like pushing into the butt, like that's how it is. I was surprised I was in the tub in labor land, but still consciously thinking like I'm pushing out. She's coming out of my butt at this point.

CIARA WHALEY: The vagina has nothing to do. Right. Totally different neighborhood.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Out of curiosity, did you wear what you thought you would be wearing?

CIARA WHALEY: No. Oh my gosh. I even thought of that when I was in the tub. No, I was wearing a regular black bra, nothing cute. My hair wasn't even done. I was still wearing my glasses. I didn't even have my contact lens.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Is that better? Did you take them off? You kept them on.

CIARA WHALEY: I kept them on.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Interesting. Okay.

CIARA WHALEY: You wanted that halter crisscross top. No, no, I got nothing. Cute. And I was so in the moment. I'm like, who cares? Another diaper. Okay.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: No vacation style clothing. Like we talked about. Okay. It's kind of interesting. Everything changed for you in the moment. It seems like from your vision of what you

thought it would be like and what it was actually like, not necessarily in a bad way, other than all that pain, right in your back, mostly, and you're in the tub and your body is just like, right. Everybody has their own experience. Yours didn't read the popular experience book for home birth where. or, you know, getting in the tub all of a sudden makes you feel a lot better, or pushing feels exhilarating. None of that. And then you're convinced the baby's coming out as a giant backed up poo.

CIARA WHALEY: And there's a couple times where, you know, they would let me push for a minute, and then the midwife, she would sort of look at her assistant and, you know, they would give each other a look and they're sort of talking to each other without saying anything, which is amazing. But I'm also like clocking their eyeballs and I'm like, I don't know, there's something wrong. Interpret. Exactly. Then they would look for the baby's heartbeat, make sure everything was okay. And then there was one point where she did another check and she's like, Sierra, you can feel her head now. She's like right there. And that's when the midwife went back on the bed and was just on her laptop and looked like she

CIARA WHALEY: was just doing, you know, it looked like she was at Starbucks at this point. Checking her email. And that's when my husband was like, when I saw her do that, I knew like everything was okay. Like she wasn't worried about it. She just knew you needed to push at this point. So that.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Did you reach down and feel the baby's head?

CIARA WHALEY: I did. I did. She had to convince me to reach down because I didn't want to move my position. Oh, what was it like when you felt the baby's head? I was shocked. That's what it was. It felt soft and squishy.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Meaning you just imagined it would be harder or you felt like something much harder must be moving through your body.

CIARA WHALEY: I just imagined it would be harder. Like I thought I would reach in and just know instantly it with the head, but it could have very easily been just the folds inside the machine. If she had not said what it was.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, that's soft. Okay, interesting. OK, so then she's on her laptop charting your notes, I assume. And what happens next?

CIARA WHALEY: My doula at this point, she is keeping me hydrated. She keeps giving me sips. I'm sounding super exhausted. I'm not even seeing people in the room. Not that everyone was worried, but I just knew the doula had been there for a while now. And I'm trying to interpret her looks. Maybe she wasn't thinking this at all. But in my head, I'm like, you know, exhaustion could be a thing. I don't want to have to go to the hospital because how am I going to get out of this tub and down these stairs? Like every push, I was like, OK, this is the one. Don't give up. In my head, I'm saying all this. And then it wasn't the one. And I'm like, OK, the next one. You're the one. Yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Is the girl dog with you?

CIARA WHALEY: No, she's downstairs with my mom.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: OK, two moms on a girl dog downstairs. Yeah, and definitely not the anxiety Jewish male bug. No. OK, so then the next push is not the one.

CIARA WHALEY: The next push is not the one. But just from the sounds I'm making, the ladies, they asked if I wanted to get my moms and bring them upstairs. So I'm like, OK, she must be close. They see she's close. This is going to be the one. And I opted to not have them come up until she came out, just because it was so intense. I didn't want anything to throw me off. I'm like, this is going to be the one. And finally, she came out. She shot right out. Her head was out for one second before her whole body just sort of shot out and voted to the top.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Did you catch her?

CIARA WHALEY: I did not catch her. My midwife sort of scooped her and passed her over to me. What was that woman like? It was insane. I mean, the whole time I'm pushing each push, I'm thinking it's the one, it's the one. And so finally, the one she does come out, the midwife assistant was like, you know, hold her right there. She's crowning. You'll be fine. And I'm like, I don't think I could hold her. She's coming out. And I just felt her shoot out. I'm looking with one eye open and I just see her float to the top. I'm like, oh, thank God, she's OK. And I sort of closed my eyes for a second. And I could hear my husband sort of getting emotional. Midwife passed her on my belly. And I just like looked down to make sure she was breathing.

CIARA WHALEY: And that's when I knew, like, who? OK, my job here is done for now. That's amazing.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Did you still feel pain?

CIARA WHALEY: I did. I tore when she came out. So I felt that tear. Yeah, I felt it was happening. I did.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, boy. I don't even want to know what that felt like. Oh, so some stitching for you.

CIARA WHALEY: Yes, some stitching. It wasn't too bad. It sounds worse than it is. But my back pain was gone at that point.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Instant instantly. Wow. OK, I'm so excited. And how was just the earliest day or two of postpartum?

CIARA WHALEY: Oh, I was running off of pure adrenaline. I was just up talking to, you know, our parents that were there visiting us, changing the baby, staring at her, breastfeeding. And my husband was the one knocked out. And I'm like, oh, babe, get your rest. I need help. I was just like, oh, nice. Now we're off after the third day.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I will say that as we're closing up here. Just huge congratulations to you. What would you say you learn from the experience? you couldn't have necessarily known beforehand, A. And B, is there anything you would do different if you were to have another birth?

CIARA WHALEY: I definitely learned that you cannot run from anything when you're in that phase of labor. And I think a lot of times through life, even when things get hard, I'm always making things look easier than they really are and you can't do that in labor. And if I had to do it again, I would want to find a strong rhythm early on whether it's dancing or moving my hips and really connecting into the early pain while it's manageable. So that once it kicks into high gear, you can kind of just keep with that.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I was really going for, would you use a different recipe for your smoothie? No, that's really great. That's really great take on wisdom. Wow. Ciara, thank you so much for joining me again and for sharing your story. I know I'm honored to have worked with you, continue working with you to just be a small fly in the wall during your amazing journey. And you have just an incredible energy. And now I'm just looking at you holding this sweet, little, peaceful angel of a baby and you're glowing. I mean, they say sometimes you're glowing. I don't know if you have a ring light, but you're glowing. It's lit. You just look so happy and I'm so happy for you.

CIARA WHALEY: Thank you so much. It's been a pleasure.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: All right, to our listeners, if you'd like to get some more pregnancy and parenting information, visit us online at informedpregnancy.com.

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