Rumer Willis: After Birth

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IN THIS EPISODE

Rumer Willis returns to tell Dr. Elliot Berlin, DC how her first birth actually unfolded. Five weeks postpartum, she recounts going past her due date, sprinting down the street — nine months pregnant — after an escaped cat, and a long stop-and-start labor at home surrounded by her mom, her sisters, her doula, and her midwife. Along the way: the dreaded peanut ball, a prayer alone in the bathtub, and the moment she stopped bracing against her contractions and started moving with them.

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DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Welcome back to the Informed Pregnancy and Parenting Podcast. I'm your host, pregnancy-focused chiropractor Dr. Elliot Berlin. And you've tuned into the after episode of a before and after birth story. My guest today was about 34 weeks pregnant last time we spoke to her, and now she's the proud mom of a bouncing baby. Rumer Willis, welcome back to the podcast.

RUMER WILLIS: Thank you so much for having me again.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Ah, I'm excited, and I don't really know the details of your birth story, so I'm excited to find them out with everybody else. But also, last time I spoke to you, things have changed a lot. First of all, your kitchen is probably

RUMER WILLIS: finished. Yes, thankfully all the construction in our house is done. That was very stressful, trying to make it all happen, but I'm very grateful that it all came together before I wanted to have my home birth, and it ended up happening, so I'm delighted.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: The nest. The nest was ready. Okay, so last time I spoke to you, you're about 34 weeks, and it seemed like you found pregnancy as much as you loved it and wanted it, and it was your life calling. It seemed like you found pregnancy to be difficult.

RUMER WILLIS: You know what's funny is now looking back on it, I'm like, man, that was so easy compared to me to some other friends that I've heard of, you know, who have shared their stories with

me, and I realized, I think because everything was so new, and my sisters and I were talking, you know, even during my labor, it's like pain with no context, or, you know, it's all of these new sensations, but you have no context. You have no idea what's happening, so everything when it happens seems kind of huge, but then you just get used to it. You know, like the first time that I had my like sciatica leg pain, I was like, oh my gosh, I'm dying. Do I have a blood clot in my leg? What's happening? You know, when I was

RUMER WILLIS: four months pregnant, and then by the end, you know, I'm walking around the grocery store with my left leg on fire, but I've just gotten used to it, and so I think I realized that it was just maybe being a little bit overdramatic at times.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Or also maybe you didn't expect it, and you know, it's sensations you never felt before.

RUMER WILLIS: Yeah, and you know, I think emotionally for me was more challenging sometimes than the physical aspects. I think physically I had an incredible pregnancy. My legs didn't swell. I, you know, truly literally just had a beach ball in my tummy. I didn't really have any of those other things that some people struggle with, and maybe again, you know, it's that classic trope of after you've had the baby, you just forget, you forget your labor pain, you forget all of the hard things, so that's the only way that people would actually have more kids.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: So do it again. Yeah. So how was the last month or so of pregnancy?

RUMER WILLIS: It was challenging, you know, but also so exciting because you just get to that point where it becomes really real, and you're just so excited to meet this little one. But then, even though my doula and my midwife both kept telling me, your due date is not real, don't listen to it, you know, don't think about it like it's the actual day that she's going to come. When it comes and goes, you still kind of go, oh man, okay, I'm really ready to have this baby out. I really want to meet this little person.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah, I heard a midwife say that it's more like the sell-by date than the use-by date.

RUMER WILLIS: Exactly, and you know, this might be woo-woo for some people, but you have to trust your kids' timing. Maybe there's a certain, you know, astrology thing that they want to come in on. Maybe there's a particular day that they want to be born on, and they're waiting for it.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah, and even scientifically, the birth window called term is a five-week window from 37 to 42 weeks. You know, there's varying degrees of term. There's early term, term, late term, but it's not pre-term, like those preemie babies before 37 weeks or post-term, after 42 weeks. So that's a pretty big window, and I think nature's not exactly like that. Even if I'm baking cookies and it says 24 minutes, I'm going to wait till they're fully baked, even if it's 25 minutes, because I like it a lot. little soft inside, but not a gooey center. Nobody wants a baby with a gooey center. Oh, and you want them to be fully cooked. Yeah. So, it sounds like it was more of a mind challenge as you got closer and then past your due date.

RUMER WILLIS: Yeah, it was so much. And a lot of my birth, actually, was so much mental and was so much about overcoming my own fear and so much of my own roadblocks rather than any

roadblocks that were put in front of me physically. I mean, obviously, yes, doing an unmedicated home birth is certainly a challenge in its own right, but so much of it was my own fear and the things that were holding me back.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: After you went past your due date, were you able to surrender into it? Did you feel sort of compelled to do things to try to help move the process along?

RUMER WILLIS: Oh, I was doing everything. I was eating all the pineapple. I was eating all of the dates. I was trying to have sex. I was trying to do pretty much everything in every book that you could ever find. But I think it was kind of a test from the universe and just patience and also trusting her again and just being okay with whatever timing was going to be right for her and not trying to rush.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And with all those things that you were doing, did you feel like any one of them was particularly helpful?

RUMER WILLIS: Well, I thought that I was going into pre-labor at 36 weeks because I had my baby shower and then I had gone out to a party and was out until four o'clock in the morning on my feet and my baby was super low. And I'm calling my midwife freaking out because you can't have a home birth before 37 weeks. So they're trying to get me to do everything possible to kind of stop my labor. And I guess it wasn't totally really pre-labor. I think I was just having really crazy Braxton Hicks, which I did for pretty much 36 weeks till the end of my pregnancy, like all day long.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, wow.

RUMER WILLIS: It was pretty wild.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I imagine it also plays a mind trick on you thinking that, oh, it must be coming because I'm having contractions.

RUMER WILLIS: All the time. Yeah. Especially as you're getting closer and you're going, okay, what's this new sensation? What's this? Because again, you have no context for what real labor will feel like. And even though someone can say to you, just trust me, you'll know when you're actually in labor. In your head, you're going, okay, well, but maybe this is, this kind of feels stronger or this feels intense, but they were right. And when you're actually in labor, it's very different.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: So let's get to there. How did your labor start and how far past your due date were you?

RUMER WILLIS: So I was 40 plus five, I think, and I went to the farmer's market. And when I got home, I realized that one of my cats was out. Like, yes, I had escaped through a window because the construction that we had going on, we were painting in the nursery and someone had left a window open. And so I got back and I'm freaking out and I'm just going, oh my gosh, if my beloved cat is gone and you know, she doesn't have her collar on. I was like, I'm going to freak out. She dies like there's coyotes, like she's a goner. So I'm walking up and down the street, can't find her. I call my partner. I say, you have to come home. You have to help me find the cat. So he pulls up in his car. It's about maybe 30 minutes later.

RUMER WILLIS: And I walked down the street and I see her maybe four or five houses down. And I go sprinting full speed, fully nine months pregnant. I'm going faster. He's driving next to me and I'm running faster than the car. So I scoop her up and bring her home. And around 4 a.m. I started having contractions like five minutes apart-ish and my doula came over and I think I lost my mucus plug at like 6 a.m.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: So your doula came over, it means that that felt different to you than all the Brax and Hicks you had leading up to.

RUMER WILLIS: Yeah. So she didn't come over that night. This is mom brain and it's fine as you guys. So I called her and I started to feel things ramp up a little bit. So then Monday morning, I went in to Dr. Crane's office to see if I was dilated, see if I had anything going on. And I was half a centimeter dilated and 30% effaced. So nothing really going on, but the baby at least had gotten a lot lower because I had been swimming at my mom's house for a while. trying to get the baby to stop my contractions before when I was 36, 37 weeks, and she had lifted way back up. And so now, all of these things to try and get her back down.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, back down to your pelvis.

RUMER WILLIS: Yeah. So I went home after I went to see Dr. Crane and I was a bit discouraged because I was just so, so ready to kind of just get everything going. So I go and I take a walk with my boyfriend and we walked quite far, actually. We went on a hike and I walked. And that night is when things kind of really kicked off. And that's when about 4 a.m., I think, my doula got there. My whole family was there. My mom and my two sisters had come over because I said I started thinking that something might be going on, even though that's something I feel like I was saying every day towards the end.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Wait, so they were over before you went to bed?

RUMER WILLIS: Yeah, because I don't know, I just wanted them here. I think I was feeling like, oh, man, this is kind of getting real. Throughout the day, I felt like my contractions had been getting a little bit more intense. And we're all just kind of a crazy tribe anyway, you know.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: All right. So Sunday, you sprint for the cat. Monday, baby's down, but not much change. Cervically. Did you guys talk about or do a membrane sweep?

RUMER WILLIS: No, we didn't. It was just not on your radar. No, because I really wanted to trust in her timing. If I had gone past or, you know, the things that were not progressing, you know, at like 41, you know, 41 plus five, something like that, then I would have done something. But I really wanted to just let my body kind of do its own thing and not rush anything.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: OK, but still kind of things started to pick up that day. And you had your whole woman tribe come over and then you go to sleep, but wake up at four-ish in the morning.

RUMER WILLIS: Well, I was up.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, you never went to sleep?

RUMER WILLIS: Not really.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: OK, so they just continued to pick up through the early hours of morning?

RUMER WILLIS: Yeah, I'd gotten some body work that night and then, yeah, I had tried to rest a little bit, but my contractions were just kind of coming what felt like to me more regularly. And so I was in and out of the bath. I was talking to my sisters. And then finally, at one point, everyone had gone to sleep and I was just in the bath by myself. And I was like, all right, here we go. Tried to say a little prayer to myself, tried to talk to my baby. And yeah, there's a photo of me, I think, actually holding my mucus plug when it came out at six a.m. And I look like the happiest kid you've ever seen. And I was just so excited that that meant something was actually going on. I was like, yes, finally. I know it at least means that something's happening.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: That's hilarious. OK, let's take a little break. When we come back, we'll find out how things progress. Welcome back. We're talking to Rumor Willis. And things are picking up. I mean, you have your mucus plug, partial success and victory. You said one thing that triggered in my mind, which is that you were just saying a prayer and connecting with your baby. I know that when we talked during the pregnancy, that was something that you were hoping to work on, that you found it harder to connect during pregnancy than you thought you might.

RUMER WILLIS: Yeah, I think before I knew she was a little girl, you know, it just felt so kind of surreal. I mean, it still feels surreal sometimes when I look at her and I go, I grew you your mind, you know, it's still, I still sometimes can't believe that I made this tiny little person who

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: It's insane. It never gets old. I've been doing this for over 20 years and it just never gets old. Like the miracle of it is mind-boggling.

RUMER WILLIS: And just the, I mean, I know everyone talks about it, but truly, truly, truly the love that you feel for this little person, I would do anything. Like everything about her, her little butt, I thought her poops or her spitting up would be gross to me. I love it all.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And it's also weird because like this is the person that gave you all that burning and you know, everything else, but still they come out and we love them with everything

RUMER WILLIS: we have. And you know what? If I ever have moments where I'm going, Oh man, like my nipples hurt or she was having a hard time latching or I'm tired. I stop myself and I go, but look at what I have. Look at this little being that I have wished and hoped for, for so long. And that makes everything, even the sleepless nights, or I mind you, I have like probably one of the easiest babies ever. So I'm ridiculously lucky. She is glorious, but it makes even any of the hard moments just, it doesn't matter.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah. All right. So let's get back into your story. You're in the tub. You got the plug. The family's over. Your doula comes over and your doula is also your mentor, right? You did doula training with her.

RUMER WILLIS: Yeah, Lori, Lori Bregman, who is incredible. My whole birth team, truly. I, these women that help bring my little girl into the world safely. Like I will love them forever, forever.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And what does Lori do when she comes over?

RUMER WILLIS: So she wanted to just kind of, you know, I think really see for herself kind of where I was at, see what I sounded like, see how consistent my contractions were because we actually started timing them. And for a little while during the night, they were probably five, six minutes apart, not perfectly in that rhythm where, you know, you're moving towards active labor, but definitely getting close. And then I think I just got really tired. And so my contractions kind of stopped. And so I slept for a little while. And by the time I woke up in the morning and Lori stayed all night with us, by the time I woke up in the morning, they were more like 10, 15 minutes apart and I was so discouraged.

RUMER WILLIS: And I let all of that fear kind of come up and I started going to myself. Oh my gosh. If I have to do a whole nother night of this, if, you know, if this is going to be how long and just, you know, going into that kind of spiral that I think I understand why then a lot of women end up with an epidural and going to the hospital because again, it's pain was no context. Right.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: You have no idea where you're on the map. On the timeline. Can you describe, do you remember what those contractions felt like overnight? Where did you feel them? And what was the sensation like?

RUMER WILLIS: I think that's what was so confusing to me about them is that, you know, when you're feeling the Braxton Hicks and people describe contractions and they go, yeah, your belly will squeeze and you're going, oh, well, my uterus is now, you know, almost to my rib cage, so maybe it will be painful in my whole stomach, but it's really not, you know, my belly would tighten and that's uncomfortable. But the pain, actual pain was really in my, like lower, where you would experience period cramps.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And in terms of the intensity?

RUMER WILLIS: Um, those I would say, I don't know, maybe like a five or a six. Okay. And I only say that because I know that the ones later were.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: So you could say that in retrospect.

RUMER WILLIS: Yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Okay. So you're a little discouraged in the morning. Things have petered out and only picked up slowly. And then what happens after that?

RUMER WILLIS: Then we all went to go take a walk, which was great. And I come back and nothing's really happening and we all of you. Oh yeah. And my doula, my mom, my sisters, and my partner. Okay. I'm a Leo, so, you know, like I love the group energy. I know some people would much prefer probably to birth alone. Have it be quiet. I need the energy.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: You like the crowd. Okay. So you come back, nothing.

RUMER WILLIS: And then Lori looks at me and she goes, you know, I think I might go home. And I realized in that moment that I am someone who loves to succeed and thrive under pressure. Because I tell you what, not five minutes later, all of a sudden, my contractions start picking up again. And it's

like my body and my mind went, well, I'm not doing this a whole nother night again. She's not going home. We're doing this today. Let's go. And so,

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Wow, you took the challenge.

RUMER WILLIS: Like it just happened. And so all of a sudden they start coming in really intense, maybe seven minutes apart. If that five to seven minutes apart and way more intense. And my midwife comes over around four, I think, and checks me. And she says that I'm 100% effaced and two centimeters dilated. And when I tell you I started crying and sobbing with delight, I was so happy because I realized that everything that I've gone through the night before was just to get all of the effacement.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: So is this Tuesday now? This is Tuesday at four p.m. Tuesday at four p.m. Okay. So to recap, you chase the cat on Sunday.

RUMER WILLIS: Yes.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Sunday night.

RUMER WILLIS: Yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And then Monday morning, baby's down, but not too much progress. Then throughout the day, you feel progress. The whole tribe comes over. Some searches overnight, then you fall asleep, nothing in the morning. Go for the tribe walk. And then Lori threatens, hey, I'm just going to go home and you're like, no, you're not. I'm in full gear.

RUMER WILLIS: I was sitting with everyone outside and I was just crying. And I was just saying, you know, like, I don't know if I can do this. And this is the birth that I want. I want to do it at home, but I just don't know if I can do it. It was a really kind of the psychospiritual experience because I feel like the fear was so much more than just the fear of this experience. It was like everything I've ever been afraid of all of the times that I thought, oh, I'm too scared or I'm too much of a weenie to do big, scary things. I feel like I heard Hillary actually say on this podcast when she was saying, you know, I'm afraid, but I can do big, scary things. I think it was her. I could be wrong.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: But I think so too.

RUMER WILLIS: So I just kept remembering that and I kept thinking to myself, I've always looked at myself like, oh, I'm just such a frady cat or, you know, I don't know if I can do this. And so I think I was working through that old lens of perception that I had of myself.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Because you have your whole crowd around you. Are there things that people are saying or doing that are helping you sort of combat that or, you know, tone those voices down?

RUMER WILLIS: I mean, honestly, a lot of it was just when I would have a contraction, I would kind of talk to myself and I would say, you know, it's okay that you're afraid. It's okay that this is a big scary thing and it's okay that you're afraid. And I just started like talking to my little girl, not my daughter, but like the little version of myself and trying to just let her know that it's okay that she was scared. That

birth is scary. That birth can be beautiful and it can be so many different things, but it can also be scary to not know what's going on. And so I kind of just let myself cry. Whatever emotion was coming forward during each surge and contraction, I just let it come forward. And then my midwife left.

RUMER WILLIS: We were all chatting for quite some time. She left. And then at around six, I got into the bathtub. She had put my, Dula had put me on the peanut ball for a while, which is like the seventh circle of hell.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, you didn't like it?

RUMER WILLIS: Oh my God. Doing contractions where you cannot move to me, like I 100% understand why women who have to be on their backs or in a hospital and not move end up with an epidural because if I hadn't been able to move through my contractions and really like flow with them, there's no way.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Wow. Okay. And the idea was she was trying to get you a little bit more open.

RUMER WILLIS: Yeah, and help the baby move down into the right position because she was a little high. And by the way, my water still had not broken.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, interesting. Okay. So 4 p.m. is when you're 100% in two centimeters. You were okay with your midwife leaving though.

RUMER WILLIS: Yeah, because you know, everyone didn't seem to think that anything was going to happen anytime soon.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Okay, but that didn't like put you into the next gear.

RUMER WILLIS: I think maybe it did a little bit, but you know, I trusted that she would come back when it was go time.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Okay. And then six, you get in the tub.

RUMER WILLIS: Yeah, six, I got into my bathtub and the contractions were getting really intense, like getting to that point where it's overwhelming pain. And the best way I could describe it was I had a few of them where it just feels like that kind of pain where you feel like you can't breathe and you're like, you know, it like makes you kind of, it takes your breath away.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: In the tub?

RUMER WILLIS: Yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Did you, because a lot of people feel like the tub sort of helps calm them or ease some of the discomfort. Did you not have that experience?

RUMER WILLIS: It absolutely does. But what I realized is I was in so much fear still and I was bracing and I wasn't working with my surges. Like I wasn't working with the contractions because I was just holding on so tight and I wasn't really letting myself just work with them. And then I don't

know what happened, what came over me, but I'm in the bathtub and I start moving in the water, like, I don't know, some sort of sexual mermaid or something. I don't even know. And just kind of like, yeah, like moving my body, like using the whole wave of the contraction and moving my whole body with the wave. And I was holding onto the sides of the tub and literally moving my hips around, doing all of that. And suddenly everything shifted.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: That was just the instinct?

RUMER WILLIS: Yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Okay. It shifted how?

RUMER WILLIS: I somehow started moving with the contractions. It took away so much of the pain. I mean, they were still, you know, intense, but it was like, I let go. I actually let myself surrender to the experience, to what was happening. And my body, it was like, it just downloaded what to do.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Wow. Is anybody with you at that point?

RUMER WILLIS: Yeah. I think my sisters had gone to the grocery store to get like supplies and tasty snacks and treats. So it was my mom, my doula and my partner.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Wow. Okay. Well, you know, I think that sometimes you can see that transition where you're biting your surges and it looks kind of violent. And then at some point you relax into one or two and you realize, oh, wait a second, this is okay. And when you start to surrender to them, it just almost looks peaceful all of a sudden.

RUMER WILLIS: Yeah. It's beautiful. Like my family took videos and it looks unbelievable. I look like I'm some sort of synchronized swimming or like a mermaid. It's great.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Okay. And then, I don't know, for some people that's where time just disappears.

RUMER WILLIS: It really did. So that was around like 6.30, maybe 6, 6.30. So then after a while, I got out of the bath and I got into this rhythm with my partner where I was laying on the floor. I had a pillow under my head, a blanket on top of me and a peanut ball between my legs in between the contractions. And we got it down to this system where I would say, okay, babe. And then I would go from laying on my side. He would pull the blanket off, pull the peanut ball out. I would get on my hands and knees. I would start moving in kind of figure eights. And sometimes, you know, either my doula or my partner would be shaking. That was a lifesaver for anyone who wants to try that.

RUMER WILLIS: Someone just shaking your butt and your hips is like a heavenly thing during a contraction ever. And we were doing that for, I don't know, maybe 45 minutes to an hour. And then I started feeling like I needed to push, which was crazy. Literally all of a sudden, when I would have a contraction, my body literally just started doing that, like, oh, my God, kind of thing.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Ejection reflex.

RUMER WILLIS: Is that what that is?

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I think so. You're not consciously pushing. Your body's just doing it.

RUMER WILLIS: Yeah, my body literally just and then they were like, wait, wait, wait, we don't know how dilated you are. Hold on. And so all of a sudden, I'm going, okay, I'm dying, but, you know, you just have that moment. So I was trying not to push too hard, but, you know, like a little bit. And again, my water still has not broken at this point.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, yes. And you're just on the floor, not in water.

RUMER WILLIS: Yeah, I'm just on my hands and knees. So we call my midwife and my dual is like, I think you need to come back. It's like right now. She gets there and I would say maybe like 25 minutes and my dual had been looking at my purple line. And for those of you that don't know what that is, I am still a little bit unclear. Maybe you can give more context, but I guess you get a purple line down the back of your butt crack that sometimes people can look at and have an idea of how dilated you are.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I have no idea. OK, well, I'm not versed in the purple line.

RUMER WILLIS: That's what my dual at least told me.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And that's interesting.

RUMER WILLIS: Yeah. She said she thought that I had progressed a lot. So my midwife gets here and checks me. And she said that I was eight centimeters. So I dilated and maybe like an hour and a half from two to eight, which is why it was so crazy.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, wow. OK, I feel like we should take a break. I need a break. We'll be right back for the rest of the story. Welcome back. We are talking to Rumer Willis and things are picking up big time. in your birth story. So in the tub, you start to kind of just naturally move, you find a rhythm, you feel more comfortable, you get out, you and your partner have a rhythm, and then you suddenly feel like, I'm pushing.

RUMER WILLIS: Yeah, and I'm trying not to, desperately, because everyone's like, you gotta wait. And so my midwife comes back, I've been in the tub maybe an hour or something, and she checks me and I'm about eight centimeters. So I dilated from two to eight in about an hour. Wow, fast moving train, still water intact. Water is still intact. So we move me into the birth tub, and I was like, I need to push, can I? And she said that I should just listen to my body. And so I started pushing a little bit. And then she was checking me and felt my water bag bulging, but still not popping, which was wild. And so I was like, Well, should we break it? Do you want to break it? And she

RUMER WILLIS: goes, Well, you can. And I was like, what? I was like, Are you serious? Okay, because I reached my finger up there and I'm feeling and it was crazy. I can totally feel this little bag. Like what like a ziploc cup of water? It feels like a water balloon. But with like a bit tougher skin, but it's wild. And so yeah, she just said, Okay, on the next contraction, just push against it with your finger. And I popped it and I think there's a photo of me and I just have this look of shock and surprise on my face. Because, you know, it's a different sensation when the water bag is pushing against your cervix to when the baby's head is. So things got more intense.

RUMER WILLIS: Yeah. And, you know, I'm kind of making these wild noises like a lion. And then everyone's kind of reminding me to not waste the energy. And to really just, you know, do what I'm sure everyone says, which is just to use that power and push the noise down. And so I'm doing that at one point, you know, I couldn't do any of the contractions on my back. It felt so counterintuitive to me. It made it way more painful. Even in the tub, it just wasn't working. So it was all in my hands and knees. At one point, I remember I tried to lay on my back just because I wanted to rest in between. And then during a contraction, everybody grabs my legs, and I just started screaming at them. And I was like, No, everybody gets off of me.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: But can you describe because it sounds like the sensations a lot different, can describe what you're feeling, either during the searches and also in between,

RUMER WILLIS: or with a push? Well, it feels like you're incredibly constipated, and that you've found a toilet, and then you've started to try and poop. But once the baby starts coming down, it's like you can't stop, you know, like you're on the train, you can't suddenly go, Oh, I guess it's not working right now. I'll drink some water and try again later. You know what I mean? It's just so much pressure. Pressure like in the rectum? Yeah, I would say rectal pressure and then pressure on your cervix. Again, I think that there's a weird memory wipe like men in black that happens after you give birth.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: The flashy, flashy thing.

RUMER WILLIS: Because I remember all of it. I remember all of the details, but the physical sensation, some of it now is like lost to me.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Does it come back when you watch the video?

RUMER WILLIS: Sometimes, yeah. I really remember the contractions, but the pushing. Once you start getting to a certain pushing phase, it's really just so much pressure and stretching. And I was doing the same thing in the water that I was doing in the bathtub earlier, which was moving through my contractions. So that was really helping. But my midwife kept checking her heart rate and it had dropped once. So she said, I think, you know, because I'm also a first time mom, she was like, I think I'm going to have you get out of the tub because I wasn't getting enough leverage. So I sat on a birth stool, which is not a stool. It is a piece of metal. And I looked at her and I said, where's the seat? And she said, there isn't.

RUMER WILLIS: I said, okay, cool. Because, you know, at that point, and I'm sure any mother knows if someone says, you know, your baby's heart rate's dipping, you're like, cool, what do we got to do? You know, you'll do anything. And so I sit on this stool and I start pushing. And my midwife is like, listen, it's a really tight squeeze down there. So I'm going to have to help stretch your tissue. And at that point, I'm just like, okay, cool. It's definitely not comfortable. But, you know, I just want to make sure she comes out safely. And I had kind of had a feeling that, you know, it might be tight down there because I could just feel in the last couple weeks of pregnancy, that the pressure from holding up the baby, that all of my muscles

RUMER WILLIS: and my pelvic floor had really tightened. And I probably should have done a little bit more pelvic floor work earlier. highly recommend that to anybody in pregnancy, really just checking that out early. And so her heart rate dipped again. And she was like, Look, she kind of just locked

eyes with me. And she said, Listen, we need to get her out. And she said, I can cut you. And I said, Okay, listen, if that's what you need to do for her to come out safely, then that's fine. And then literally, I had a contraction and her head was out with one push. And then her whole body was out with it. Oh, wow. Okay. It's like under pressure. What? No, here we go.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I was like, Okay. Oh, wow. So many questions. Were you fearful? Was that a scary moment?

RUMER WILLIS: No, it was like I was in this other universe. And I had just transported to that place, where I don't even know. My dual glory talks about it, you know, that when you are in transition, and how you kind of just go to this other place. And I think at that point, it was like this warrior mama lion part of me came forward. And it was like, whatever I need to do, it didn't matter. By the time I got on the stool. That's the thing, like even her hands stretching me anything, I feel like I had kind of moved past feeling the physical sensations of pain. I mean, yes, it was painful. But I couldn't even tell you that her head coming out was the most painful part. You know what I mean? I feel like the earlier

RUMER WILLIS: contractions were more painful than that. Because at that point, you're in it and you're committed because I was so close to meeting my baby. Yeah. So when her head came out, did you reach down and feel that? It happened so fast, I couldn't. I was like, boom, head body. Oh, literally, it was like, I pushed a little bit, like I pushed why I didn't push a little bit. I pushed harder than I've ever probably pushed. But it was literally like I pushed her head was out and I pushed again and her whole body was out. Oh, my gosh. Okay. There was no pause. There was no pause in between. Like, oh, it wasn't, you know, one of those moments where it was, oh, your head is out. You know, let's wait for the next contract. No, it was like, boom,

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: boom. Wow. That's intense. I mean, do you remember the mind and or body experience right

RUMER WILLIS: when you got to hold her? Oh, I mean, it was incredible. My midwife and my partner caught her and it was the wildest thing. So she had a cord wrapped around her neck, but it was also wrapped around her body in like almost like a prom sash. Wow. You know, we had four hands under there under the birth stool and I'm going, give me the baby, give me the baby. And it had wrapped around her in this wonky way. So they had to navigate for that for a second, but then as soon as they untangled her, she was in my arms and they had me hold her upside down for a second. Cause there was a bit of meconium in the fluid that came out. But yeah, after that, it was the most ecstatic, joyful moment of my entire life. And I just started

RUMER WILLIS: sobbing with joy. And I have some of the most beautiful photographs of it, of just me looking at her and looking at my sisters and looking at my mom and my mom holding me. And my sister actually told me something later that I didn't even realize I said, but I looked at Luetta at one point and I said, I missed you so much. And I felt that was so sweet because it truly was like this moment of, oh yes, we're back together. Oh, wow. You know, it's like, oh yes, this person who I've known and I've been waiting for forever. Here you are.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Wow. That's so beautiful. I'm like tearful myself trying to picture all the people

RUMER WILLIS: around you must've been bawling too. It was incredible. It was so powerful to have truly like such gratitude and the way that my mom, especially just held space for me and my sisters and to have just this, and I love my partner and he was incredible the whole time. But for me, because I'm so close with my family to have this lineage of females and this tribe of women around me bringing in the next generation and being able to witness me going through that process and bringing her into the world was like something that

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I will treasure for the rest of my life. So beautiful. And I remember you said something like the fact that your mom had three unmedicated births and that Lori kind of told you that that's like your imprint now, that's your ancestral imprint. And so, you know, to have your mom there in the flesh also to back up that imprint. It just seems so amazing. All right. In a nutshell, baby's about five weeks old now, Lou. Lou and Rue?

RUMER WILLIS: Lou and Rue. Anyway, I have to tell you one last thing because it's something that's pretty brilliant. I thought so at least. So here I am. I've just given birth to this tiny little girl. I step up off of the birth stool and everyone's like, okay, here, go sit on the couch. I go to try and sit down. I cannot. It's just still too much pressure. And so I'm going, okay, guys, hold on, I got to get up. So, I literally have Luetta wrapped in a towel in one hand, and I say, I think I got to get the placenta out, you guys. And so, before I can even sit down or do anything, and this is like maybe, I don't know, two minutes, three minutes after she's born, five at the most, I start walking back over to where the birth stool is,

RUMER WILLIS: and I literally just push my placenta out into my hand, and it comes out so fast, and nobody knows what's going on. So, one of my midwives literally just happened to be underneath to help me catch it, and she was like, whoa, whoa, whoa.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Wow. Okay. You didn't even need to be challenged for that one.

RUMER WILLIS: No. It was so nice, though, to have everything out of me. I couldn't sit down until

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: everything was out. It was such a cool, you got your mucus plug, you popped your water, you got your placenta. I mean.

RUMER WILLIS: It was very primal. It was like really feral. Sounds like it. It was really primal. I felt like I was connecting to this deep power in the core of my being that has always been there, but that I cut off access to a long time ago that somehow got activated during this experience because it was intense and wild and just magical.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah. So, I have two questions left in my mind. In a nutshell, how would you say the first five weeks of motherhood have been?

RUMER WILLIS: Like the greatest gift of my life. I've never loved anything more in my life. She's my favorite person. And, you know, it's challenging. And again, I feel like I'm saying this. I realized that I am very privileged to be able to take the time off to be able to spend with her. And I know that that's such a gift that not everyone has the ability to do. And I'm so grateful because this time is unbelievable with her and being able to exclusively breastfeed. And that's been going amazingly well, which I know that also some people struggle with. But I feel like I have such an incredible support

system of my family and my partner and my doula and my midwife. And I found someone who I didn't have anyone help us at night or anything like that,

RUMER WILLIS: but I did have someone cook me a lot of Ayurvedic meals in the very beginning. And that was super helpful just for my digestion, for hers, to not have to think about it. I would recommend that over anything else.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: It's a good gift registry request. My last question was, you know, in hindsight, I guess it's two parts. Is there anything you learned from doing it that you think I never could have learned until I did it? And part B is, you know, if you were to do it again, is there anything that you would want to do differently?

RUMER WILLIS: I think exactly even what you said, that I just think that if I ever question myself again of, oh, I wonder if I can do this. I had an unmedicated home birth and brought my daughter into the world, you know what I mean? And taught my own water bag. And I did all of these things that are incredible. And I brought this beautiful little girl into the world. At my house with my family. And I think I just faced so many fears that I feel like now, if I ever need a reminder, it's like, you can do anything. Why are you questioning that?

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah. And you saved the kitty.

RUMER WILLIS: Yeah. And I spent the whole street, nine months pregnant.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: You know, it's interesting. I did do some work in emergency medicine, in ambulances, and as a result, emergency rooms. And a few times I was young, I was 1920. And a few times I saw people at the end of life, sometimes even one case, a very young person. And it's interesting to see how in those instances, the last request was, I want my mom. Mm hmm. And I don't think that ever goes away. Like the insane way that you grow us, women grow us in your body and bring us into the world and all the nurturing that even happens before that, bring us into the world through your body and feed us with your body and just that unconditional love that you have, like the anything you would do and the power that you

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: get. And now knowing that there's nothing you can't do, it's the reason I get it. Mother's Day is like, you know, a month of planning and everything under the sun and Father's Day is a tie. It makes sense to me.

RUMER WILLIS: I think, and to your second question, I feel like if I did it again, which I shouldn't say if, I'm definitely doing this again. I feel like I'd do it again tomorrow. I think I would just remember to enjoy being pregnant. I miss feeling her kick inside of me. I really do. And even though there were moments of challenge, physically and emotionally during pregnancy, now that I'm looking back, I love being pregnant. It's amazing. This energy and this connection that you feel to this

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: being, it's such a privilege. It's a paradigm shift. Well, huge congratulations to you. I'm so happy for you, and thank you for sharing your beautiful story with us. Probably work seems like a million miles away, but you are working on some things. What can we expect from

RUMER WILLIS: Rumer Willis in the near future? Well, I'd really love to share so much of the things, especially around pregnancy and motherhood, that really supported me. Like I had an ant acid that literally saved my life for the last three months, and I'm kind of creating a collection and kind of going to create some guides to each trimester and then postpartum, and just things that I want to share of my experience. I really want to create a community and a collective brain of motherhood, similarly to kind of like what you're doing, to just share information because I think it's so important. I think people used to do it so much, especially with women. We all used to share information and share stories, and I think

RUMER WILLIS: it's so important to be really honest and to share even the things that you think are gross or whatever it is, just in service of helping other people along the journey.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah, I remember there's that book, What to Expect When You're Expecting, and I remember someone doing like a workshop called What to Really Expect When You're Expecting, and based on your description of pushing, I feel like you hold nothing back.

RUMER WILLIS: No, you got to tell people the real deal.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: It's awesome. Yeah, there's a lot of pieces in the puzzle of trying to, you know, help create that community and that flow of information, you know, vital information that people need. And, you know, I'm excited that you're joining the puzzle.

RUMER WILLIS: Thank you so much.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Where can we find you online?

RUMER WILLIS: I would say on my Instagram, which is just my name. Rumour Welles, Instagram, Rumour Welles, I will see you there.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: We're Dr. Berlin at D-O-C-T-O-R-B-E-R-L-I-N.

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