# HealthyGirl Kitchen with Danielle Brown: Before Birth

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IN THIS EPISODE

HealthyGirl Kitchen founder Danielle Brown joins Dr. Elliot Berlin, DC at 35 weeks pregnant with her first baby. She shares how a cheese-heavy Michigan childhood and a brutal freshman year of unlimited college dining halls led her to veganism — and ended years of chronic heartburn — opens up about the miscarriage that preceded this pregnancy and the anxiety that came with conceiving again, and explains how she's fueling a plant-based pregnancy, preparing with hypnobirthing and a doula, and heading into her first birth with an open mind.

***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, Dr. Elliot Berlina, pregnancy-focused chiropractor. My guest today is the CEO and founder of Healthy Girl Kitchen. She is a vegan chef on a mission. Not only is she an accomplished entrepreneur and impactful healthy life influencer, but she's also currently pregnant with her first child, making her insights and expertise particularly valuable for our audience. Danielle Brown, welcome to the podcast.

**DANIELLE BROWN:** Thank you so much for having me. I am very honored to be here.

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** Well, I'm actually most excited to have you as a guest. I have been following you for a long time, and I don't know what it is about your page. It stands out more than anybody else to me in the food space in general, but especially in the vegetarian genre, because when you make stuff, it just looks so inviting. And I'm a meat guy. I'm a meat and potatoes guy. And everything you make, I'm like, sometimes, even more recently, more frequently, I will think about the things that you've made and how colorful they look and how delicious they look, even though there's no meat in there. Sometimes potatoes, but no meat. And I don't know how you do it. And also, it exudes a passion from you. Like, it's not

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** just like, oh, look, you can cook this or make this or eat this. Like, you can feel the passion inside you about how incredible that's going to make you feel. And if I were to do the same thing, probably make me feel so. You've influenced me, and I do. I don't make them yet, but I've been ordering more like salad and healthier options when I order in. And your stuff, your whole brand, your whole smile that you put up when you eat healthy food is in my mind when I do it. So thank you very much. Just on a personal note.

**DANIELLE BROWN:** Oh, I'm so glad. I think because I grew up eating meat, dairy and eggs, I did not grow up as a vegan. I always thought vegans were kind of strange. I make all my food with the meat eater in mind. I'm like, what would I have wanted? What plant based version of this food would I have wanted when I was still eating meat? Because most of the people who actually follow me are not vegan, are not vegetarian. They're just looking to incorporate more healthy meals. And I happen to make them plant based without any animal products. And I think people, even if they do a meatless Monday or they have one thing a week, or maybe they're trying to learn how to make tofu because they heard it's good for you

**DANIELLE BROWN:** and they want to have more plant protein, but I have no idea how to make it. That's where I come in. And I also think that healthy eating can seem so complicated. And I really, what I try to do and what I'm so passionate about is showing people it does not have to be hard and it doesn't have to be complicated and it can taste really good.

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** Yes, that all comes through. That all comes through because in my mind, you know, when I was a kid and my mom wanted me to be healthier, she just like stuck carrot sticks in my bag. And I was like, okay, I feel like a rabbit, but your food looks amazing. Let's go to the beginning. Where are you from originally when you were back in the days when you were eating meat and eggs?

**DANIELLE BROWN:** I was eating meat and eggs in the suburbs of Detroit. I grew up in a town called Farmington, Michigan. And actually I was born in New Jersey, but my family moved to Michigan and grew up in the freezing cold. I'm now living in Florida, but I grew up in Michigan. I have one brother and grew up going to private Jewish day schools my whole life, really small, tight knit Jewish community. And my grades were really small. I had like 50 kids in my grade. So I grew up in a very, very close knit Jewish community.

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** What was that like in general? Because that doesn't seem like the epicenter of Jewish

**DANIELLE BROWN:** communities out in Farmington. It actually is. It's a big Jewish community. So you also have West Bloomfield, which is nearby, which people also refer to as West Jew field. And I mean, if anyone's familiar with Michigan, like Oak Park, Southfield, Detroit, there's actually a really big Jewish population. My family belonged to the largest reform synagogue in all of the United States. So it's actually a pretty big Jewish community there. Like as a kid, what was your family's take on nutrition? So my mom cooked almost everything for us. We went out to eat once in a while, but every single night she made dinner growing up. We always had dinner as a family sitting down

**DANIELLE BROWN:** like TV off. Obviously we didn't have phones or screens or anything at that time. So when it was dinner time, it was everyone around the table. Every single night she made dinner, you know, healthy eating at the time. Like people weren't making quinoa yet. People didn't really use avocados. Maybe you'd eat guacamole at a Mexican restaurant, you weren't buying them in your home. But I think my mother really did make healthy food for the time. So dinner was always like some kind of protein, a chicken, a fish. We didn't eat a ton of red meat and we would have some kind of salad every night and maybe a starch like a potato or a rice, but we ate a lot of dairy as a family. That's something

**DANIELLE BROWN:** I do remember. There was cheese on everything. We had cheesy toast in the morning for breakfast. If we had taco night or pasta night, I mean, we'd be pouring on the cheese. So dairy was honestly a bigger part of our nutrition growing up than meat or fish or even eggs. But my mom did prioritize home cooked meals. So I did grow up eating pretty well and she packed our lunches every single day for school. And there was the option to get lunch at our schools, but she always made us lunch. So I'm really grateful for that. We did grow up eating a lot of dairy products and I did end up having some health issues from that, which I'll get into. But I think I grew up generally eating pretty healthy. I was always

**DANIELLE BROWN:** interested in nutrition. I actually, I found the other day, my mom was going through all of my old like childhood, like art projects and stuff. And she found one of those projects where you had to say what you wanted to be when you grew up. And I wrote a dietitian. Yeah. I think I was like seven or something. I don't even know how I knew what a dietitian was, but I always was really interested in healthy eating. I was also at the same time obsessed with Food Network. So my mom would have to peel me away from the TV. I'd wake up at six AM, go downstairs and I'd watch Food Network cooking shows. Maybe other kids were watching Cartoon Network or something. I was in love with Food Network. I loved,

**DANIELLE BROWN:** loved, loved watching cooking shows. Were you a little helper in the kitchen? You know, I watched a lot. I'm like a very observant person. I'm very visual and I always like to watch. So I would just sit there and watch my mom make dinner. And I'd watch these TV shows. She'd let me help. But I was more of like, I'd pull up a chair and I would just watch her cook. No, it's like, I like to watch basketball and eat stadium food rather

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** than play basketball. Yeah. So I'd watch my mom cook and then I'd eat all her food after. All right. First of all, I have to wonder, is there sort of like a vegan

**DANIELLE BROWN:** cheese that you like after growing up so cheesy? I did grow up pretty cheesy. And I think it's really hard to find a great plant-based cheese, but I always tell people just like you would try a bunch of regular dairy cheeses, try a bunch of vegan cheeses and see what you like, because everyone has a different preference. I really like the brand Miyoko's. They have amazing plant-based cheeses that are also really healthy and use great ingredients. There are some of the plant-based cheeses where I'm not a huge fan of the ingredients. They use Miyoko's as one of the really good ones. I love Kite Hill. They make a great vegan cream cheese. Miyoko's also makes a great vegan cream cheese. Siggy's I think makes the best

**DANIELLE BROWN:** vegan yogurt. It's the lowest sugar one, I believe in all of the plant-based ones and also has the highest protein. I felt that it was really tough to find a vegan yogurt that also had a significant amount of protein in it rather than just a ton of fat where Siggy's has I think 11 grams of protein per serving, so it's a great vegan protein source too.

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** I had Siggy's vegan yogurt and I didn't know it was vegan.

**DANIELLE BROWN:** It's really good. It's really yummy. It's creamy. Yeah, creamy and delicious. It's like

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** a good Greek yogurt. All right. So how did you switch from cheesy with a side of beef to

**DANIELLE BROWN:** vegan? What was the transformation? So long story short, I was a freshman in college at Michigan State University and I was so happy to be unsupervised without my parents. Well, I had a dining hall pass and the dining hall passes at Michigan State were unlimited. So you could go as many times as you wanted during the day to the dining halls and that was super fun to me because these dining halls were literally like a mall food court. They had all-you-can-eat pasta bar, all-you-can-eat pizza bar, make your own ice cream cookie sandwiches, soft serve machines on every corner. I'm not kidding. These were crazy and they were all over campus. It's not like there was just

**DANIELLE BROWN:** one. There was 10 different ones you could choose from that all had different cuisines. They had like homemade Indian food. They had like oven pits where they were making pita, make your own omelet station. Like I'm listing all these cause I want everyone to understand like how crazy it was. It puts Las Vegas to shame. 100% crazy. So I was eating a lot and I was eating food that was pretty unhealthy for me. And while this was fun for a semester, once we hit second semester, I felt that freshman 15 coming on. I noticed that when I got home from eating, I felt really sick and I'd have to tell my roommate, I'm like one sec, I have to run to the bathroom. And my stomach was really upset. And again, I was eating a lot of dairy,

**DANIELLE BROWN:** again, soft serve machines on every corner, mac and cheese, make your own pizza. And I really got to this point where I was sick of feeling sick. And I should also say I was napping after all of my classes. So I'd get home from class and I'd take a three hour nap. I was fatigued. I had zero energy. I also was suffering from really chronic heartburn and very poor digestion. I had gone to so many doctors and had told them that I had chest pain and none of them were like, I think you will have heartburn. I just thought that, I don't know, I didn't put two and two together. I also didn't think that as a 17, 18 year old, I'd be having heartburn. That kind of seemed like an older person problem. So I had been dealing with this horrible heartburn

**DANIELLE BROWN:** for a long time. And I decided I needed to start eating healthy. I didn't know what that meant. I just started doing the obvious, cutting out extra sugar and not having unlimited soft serve. And I made the salad bar my best friend. And I stumbled across a plant-based diet in my research. Again, like I said earlier, I always thought vegans were very weird. I didn't know how someone could give up meat, let alone like dairy, eggs. I'm like, what do you eat if you're cutting out all those things? So in doing my research, I had just seen all of these people experiencing all of these

incredible benefits from cutting out animal products. And I wanted to give it a go. I've also on the side, I'm like a very empathetic person,

**DANIELLE BROWN:** caring person towards animals. I love animals so much. So it also appealed to me that I would be saving animals in the process of this diet. But at first it really was health motivated. So I decided to do it. I was in a dorm, had very limited resources, and I decided to try being vegan. And again, made the salad bar my best friend. I was microwaving sweet potatoes in my dorm room. I was doing whatever I could to make my new meat-free lifestyle work. And within four months, I had lost 20 pounds. I wasn't trying to lose weight. It just kind of came off. I wasn't calorie counting. I was eating pretty much whatever I wanted within the plant-based realm. My heartburn went away and never came back. I remember one day I'm just like,

**DANIELLE BROWN:** I don't think I've had this chest pain that I've been experiencing for months or for years. Yeah, I'd been about four months. I'm like, I haven't had it. And that was like a real wake-up call for me of how powerful diet is. And I had more energy than ever before. I didn't need to nap after class, and I really did feel amazing. And I knew I had to make it my mission to help other people the way I helped myself. And I wanted to just teach people the secrets to eating plant-based meals and eating healthy without feeling restricted or without feeling unsatisfied because there's this myth that eating vegan just has to be tofu and lettuce and that you're hungry after you eat a meal.

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** I forget my carrot sticks.

**DANIELLE BROWN:** 100%. And so I knew that whatever I did, I had to help people the way I helped myself.

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** I mean, my description at the beginning, you see where it comes from. It's not a job for you. It's a mission. And you're coming from a place of personal journey and your empathy towards animals includes humans. And you want us to also experience just a better life. I think especially after the pandemic when we all sat around doing nothing and just eating garbage, this is a great time to consider. For me, I'm very strongly considering how can I take these things and incorporate them into my life. And to our listeners, if you look at Healthy Girl Kitchen, you're gonna be hooked very, very quickly. It's not an infomercial. It's not a paid episode. It's nothing like that. I'm personally obsessed with Healthy Girl Kitchen lifestyle

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** and on a mission to figure out how I can do it for me and my family. All right, Daniel, let's take a little break. And when we come back, we'll talk about your current state of pregnancy and impending birth. We'll be right back. and brandy four times welcome back we're talking to danielle brown from healthy girl kitchen okay so you went from a lot of cheese and meat and michigan and now you're in florida as a vegan

**DANIELLE BROWN:** where'd you meet your husband i've known my husband since i was about eight years old my best friends growing up are his first cousins so he's from new york and whenever he would visit michigan to visit his michigan family from new york i was always hanging around because they were my friends so i grew up knowing him and his family and he always had a secret crush on me sorry to him sorry ari i didn't really notice to him he was just he was my best friend's first cousin and so he always had this little crush on me and i think i was in like seventh grade and he was

in ninth grade and he texted me and he told me i was cute and i'm like oh you know that's nice and that was kind

**DANIELLE BROWN:** of the first time i like kind of realized you know he thought of me in in that way and then one day when i was 16 i was scrolling through my contacts and keep in mind he's in new york i'm in michigan i'm scrolling through my contacts as a bored teenager and i see his name and i'm like oh that'd be funny i should text ari brown and so i texted him and the rest is history we've talked every day since and been together for now almost 10 years we got married in 2021 and now our baby's on the way oh wow you had a covid marriage we did and i've been with him since i was 17 so he was my first boyfriend only person i've ever been with so he stuck with it and we're teenagers look how productive that could be yeah and we

**DANIELLE BROWN:** were long distance for five years which was brutal but i told everyone this is my husband we're gonna be together forever i knew like a couple months in i'm like this is the person i'm gonna marry i always knew he was my person and i had my high school teachers telling me like they knew about our whole relationship and they're like danielle you know we want to set your expectations like this might not work out and they knew that i wanted to go off to college and still be dating him and they're like you know danielle like we never really see this work out i'm like and i told my high school teachers i'm like no look like you're gonna see me get married one day and you're gonna see the pictures on facebook when i get

**DANIELLE BROWN:** married and sure enough and then i had my high school teachers messaging you they're like you

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** were right ari brown ari brown for the win so you guys got married a few years ago and now you're expecting and in all that time from teenager to now when did the conversation about kids come up where you guys always on the same page about family so to put this in perspective

**DANIELLE BROWN:** we're having a boy we picked out his name eight years ago when we like first first started dating i'm like we have to pick our kids names and we sat one night and looked through so many lists online and we found this name and we've literally had it for the past eight years so kids have always been a part of the conversation we always knew that we wanted a family together i think that was just a given and we always just kind of dreamed of our family talked about our kids and it was always attractive to me to be a young mom and honestly all i've ever wanted to be is a mom i don't want to say i didn't have career aspirations but my want and need to be a mother is a million times stronger than any career

**DANIELLE BROWN:** aspirations that i've ever had so like my mom would walk in on me when i was five years old and i was like pretending to breastfeed my baby dolls she'd walk and i'd be like go away i'm breastfeeding i think that might have happened to me with my mom as well but separate story was pregnancy something that came easy for you so i would say yes and no i was able to get pregnant super quickly so in december of 2020 i found out i was pregnant i was super excited i honestly got pregnant really quickly i always want to mention i was using Fertility tracking. I was taking my basal body temperature. I think it's super interesting and really helpful. I recommend it to a lot of women. And I think that helped me to get pregnant fairly quickly.

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** Can I jump in here for a second? Just my mind is shooting fireworks with questions, uh, young, healthy couple. Was there something that motivated you to want to track because usually the more calculated things become sometimes the more stressful they become, but it sounds like it was the opposite for you.

**DANIELLE BROWN:** Yeah, I didn't want to waste any time. And I was like, if we can be more sure of the exact time that I'm ovulating, then it could save us a couple of months down the road instead of just this guessing game of when I'm ovulating and when's the best time to try to have a baby.

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** Okay. So you decided a proactive approach. Were you worried that it would take time?

**DANIELLE BROWN:** I wasn't sure. I feel like there's so many women these days who struggle with getting pregnant, it's so prevalent, or at least it seems like it. And I just know, you know, friends and so many women and on podcasts I hear have to go through IVF. So I think because it's now talked about so much and women's fertility struggles are so, you know, people are more open on social media too, about those kinds of things. So I didn't know if I would face struggles. So I just told Ari, I'm like, we might as well use this tracking. And I want to say this was December of 2021. I found out I was pregnant. And I was really shocked that it happened so quickly. We were so excited, but I wasn't like that person who cried or bawled

**DANIELLE BROWN:** my eyes out when I found out it was more shock. Like I remember just like shaking. I'm like, this is so crazy. And we were just really excited, but I got sick super quickly. It was pretty nauseous. I had all these pregnancy symptoms and we went to our first appointment at, I believe I was supposed to be around seven weeks, I said to my doctor, I'm like, I'm so excited. You know, I hope we see a heartbeat and he just goes, well, I can't invent one if it's not there. And yeah, long story short, I have a new doctor now. He had to go, he had terrible bedside manner, but when they did the ultrasound, I believe they saw a gestational sack and maybe a yolk sack, but they weren't seeing that fetal pole or they

**DANIELLE BROWN:** weren't seeing, you know, the baby yet. We're at that point at seven weeks, you know, you should be seeing something and you should be able to see a little heartbeat. So he was like, look, either you're off on your dates or this isn't a viable pregnancy. And to me, I was like, wait, what? Like rewind. I knew that people had miscarriages and I knew that that was a possibility, but you know, again, like you said, like we're young, healthy, I didn't really think of that as being an option. And I thought that everything was going really well and I thought everything was going to be fine. And I also was using the tracking. So in my gut, I knew that my dates weren't wrong, but I wanted

**DANIELLE BROWN:** to go with that because it was either that, or I was having a miscarriage. So he said, I want you to come back in a week and you know, I need there to be a heartbeat when you come back, otherwise this is not viable. So we come back long story short. So the next appointment that actually did see a flicker of a heartbeat. And they're like, Oh, like you were just off on your dates. Don't even worry. We see flicker of a heartbeat. Everything's going to be fine. And I was so relieved and so happy. And I'm like, well, I guess I was off on my dates. You know, I don't know everything. I'm not a doctor. And then I think about like a week and a half later, I start feeling really bad, lower back

pain and I start bleeding a little bit.

**DANIELLE BROWN:** And I just kind of knew I'm like, something's wrong. And everyone was trying to calm me down. Everyone's like, it's so normal to spot during pregnancy, which it can be. Everyone's like lower back pain is really normal during pregnancy. I'm like, yeah, but like later, later. Yeah. And I just knew like in my gut and as like a maternal instinct, I'm like, something's wrong because of all of our previous appointments and kind of the guessing of like the heartbeat and everything. So I called my OB and I went in and they did an ultrasound and they're like, yeah, we don't see a heartbeat. So that was really like a tough time. I remember all of a sudden they're just like rattling off options to me. They're like, okay, so you can take this pill.

**DANIELLE BROWN:** You can get a DNC or, you know, you can let it pass naturally. I'm like, wait, what? I'm like, I was so overwhelmed and I had just found out that, you know, the pregnancy wasn't going to happen and that this wasn't viable. I like, I hate that word, but it was just a lot to process. And they're already like talking to me about my options for, you know, letting them as carriage pass. They're like, but you can think about it, like call us and let us know, but like, don't wait too long because you could get an infection. I'm like so overwhelmed. I'm 25 years old. I'm like the first of my friends to get married. I'm also, I was the first of my friends to get pregnant. So I didn't really have too many people to talk.

**DANIELLE BROWN:** to. And we were devastated. It was a really, really difficult time. And so it really took months for me to heal emotionally. I ended up going with the DNC. My OB assured me, she's like, I'm very gentle. I was worried about like uterine scarring and all the things that you see online with like risk for DNC, but she's like, it's very safe. I do this all the time. I'm extremely gentle. Don't worry in this way, you know, we'll clear everything out. So I felt that that was at the time it's kind of like a pick your poison. There isn't like a good option, but it was the one that I went with. And yeah, it took a while for me to feel like put back together, created a lot of anxiety for me because I just didn't want it to happen again.

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** Many people start to wonder, what did I do?

**DANIELLE BROWN:** A hundred percent. I'm glad you brought that up. So I actually had COVID during implantation. I had a high fever. I was really sick. And even though it turned out to be pretty mild, obviously having a high fever in early pregnancy, especially very early pregnancy, puts you at risk. And so when I told all of my doctors that they're like, we're seeing this a lot and there's a very high likelihood that, you know, you having COVID could have interfered with, you know, implantation in some way. So, you know, that could have played a factor. Who knows, but really tried not to blame myself. I think a lot of women go there. They're like, did I exercise too hard? Did I drink the wrong

**DANIELLE BROWN:** tea? Did I have too much of this? Did I accidentally make my shower too hot? I think women go to blame themselves when really it just happens. And what I learned is that it's so common. And every woman I then talked to and opened up to was like, oh, I actually had, you know, two, three miscarriages, you know, I have four kids, but I had miscarriages in between all my kids. And it really was like almost every woman I talked to who had kids was like, oh yeah, like I had a miscarriage. I'm like, oh, I had no idea. I had no clue. So honestly, it really helps me feel less alone that it is so common. I don't know if a lot of women feel that way, but it made me feel

**DANIELLE BROWN:** better that I wasn't just like alone in that situation. I mean, your progression is

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** extremely common. And I would dare say normal, which is that, you know, part of the process is having that egg be fertilized, but that's just the beginning of many steps that have to fall in line for a healthy pregnancy to grow and for your body to want that healthy pregnancy to grow. And you could do absolutely everything right. And if it's not, as you said, a viable pregnancy, if it's not a good match, if it's not compatible with life, then it will be rejected and you'll go through the process again. And at 25, you have a lot of time, right? And in your mind, you don't have a lot of time because when you're ready, you're ready. But at 25, you have a lot of time for that process to

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** take place. It's a lot more stressful, I think, you know, for people starting later out when they're 39, when every cycle really, really counts. But the whole progression of being excited about your pregnancy and then things are sort of question mark and then you realize it's a miscarriage and then you blame yourself and then you're struggling to figure out what to do now that the pregnancy has failed to thrive. I hate that word also. And then realizing, oh, this happens to anybody who has a few kids probably has had a miscarriage or knows somebody who has, it's part of the process. And everyone feels alone. There's a film we brought into Informed Pregnancy Plus called You Are Not Alone,

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** for very specifically that reason. It was made because you think, why did this happen to me? Why me? But it happens to so many people and you're not alone. And I really appreciate you for sharing. I could see and hear that it's still a painful experience for you and not always easy to share. But I appreciate that you did so other people will also sort of learn early on that miscarriage is a real possibility. It's not anything broken about you. And you're definitely not alone. I actually, I had someone message me the other

**DANIELLE BROWN:** day and she was like, Danielle, I have to be honest with you. This was just a direct message I got on social media. She goes, my daughter recently had two miscarriages and you posting your pregnancy content is really triggering for our family. It's really hard to see you posting your bump and how you're washing all the baby's clothes and getting the nursery ready. And it's really painful because our family has gone through these losses. And I was really honest with her and I was like, I don't think she had known about my story, even though I had shared it on social media. I'm like, look, I've been there myself. I know the pain all too well. I said, but I want to give women hope who most people who

**DANIELLE BROWN:** follow me do know my story. And I'm like, this This is my journey and my family and what I'm going through. And I'm just always sharing and being honest with my experiences at the time. So I told her, I'm like, so sorry for your pain, so sorry for your loss. But I guess the message was, and what I had tried to do is I told myself after our loss, I told myself, I said, I'm always going to try though, to be happy for other people and be happy for other pregnant women. Because it was hard at the time, you know, when I saw someone pregnant or saw another like social media influencer posting about her pregnancy and her kids. And, you know, it just made me sad initially because that was supposed to be me.

**DANIELLE BROWN:** But then I was like, no, no, like that is going to be me and I will have a family and I always wanted to celebrate and be happy for other people. And so I would say if you're going through a miscarriage or going through fertility struggles, I think putting in the effort to not have animosity towards other people who are going through a pregnancy or have kids, or you view them as like having success in fertility, it's so important because you don't know what people have gone through. Maybe the person you see with four kids also had four miscarriages or maybe they had to go through IVF to get all their kids or maybe they didn't and it was just easy for them. But you harboring any kind of anger towards anyone or animosity will only

**DANIELLE BROWN:** hurt you and you carrying that burden and carrying any kind of hate will just honestly even make it harder for your fertility journey. So if you can stay positive, if you can stay positive towards other people and their pregnancies and stay happy for them, I promise it will just take so much weight off your shoulders.

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** And that's really wise on two levels, but also extremely hard to do. My wife and I also struggled with fertility hardcore before we had our four kids and it was extremely difficult, especially, you know, if you're pregnant around the same time and then our pregnancy ends and their pregnancy continues and they go through all the milestones and then they invite you to the baby shower. I'm genuinely happy and excited for them, but also it's salt on an open wound for me. So it's very hard to juggle that, but it's important to separate. I'm not angry at them. I'm just, you know, sad for myself. I'm angry at the world, but also anger is a poison that we swallow and hope that somebody else dies.

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** That hurt feelings, that anger that builds up inside you only harms you. It doesn't harm anybody else. And so for your own self-preservation, self-help, it's important to figure out how to sort of vent out those frustrations and those feelings. It's very complex, but I think open sharing and conversations like yours at least lead to conversation that could be therapeutic and healing. So thank you for that. I want to talk to you about veganism and pregnancy and your plans for birth. We'll be right back for one more segment. Welcome back to the podcast. We're talking to Danielle Brown from Healthy Girl Kitchen. Okay. Now pregnant again. Were you tracking this one too?

**DANIELLE BROWN:** Danielle Brown I was tracking this one too. Happened again, really quickly, which I'm grateful for. I know how long it can take people to get pregnant. So I 100% do not take that for granted, but it came with a lot of anxiety. I just wanted everything to go well and I was so nervous. And I remember our first ultrasound appointment, it was at eight weeks. And I told the ultrasound tech, I'm like, just so you know, like I'm really nervous. And she was like, oh my God, she was like, don't worry. I'm about to give you really good news. And she hadn't even seen the ultrasound yet. I don't know why she promised something like that, but she was so positive and so sweet. And I told her, I was like, I was throwing up on the way to the appointment.

**DANIELLE BROWN:** She's like, oh, you're fine. Don't worry. And of course, like we see heartbeat and everything looked really good. And just with every appointment and as every week went by, I just had less and less anxiety. And now I am 35 weeks pregnant tomorrow. So it's gone by so fast, but I'm really grateful that everything's been going well. And like, knocking wood has been a super healthy

pregnancy.

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** It's hard sometimes to get all the nutrition that you need during a pregnancy. Limiting yourself to certain food groups seems like it would make it harder. How have you tackled that?

**DANIELLE BROWN:** So I have been eating this way now for almost eight years. So I have a whole list of a million different plant-based recipes that I make all the time. I have my staples, just like everyone has their usual staples. I have all of my regular plant-based meals that are my go-tos. I just think in pregnancy, I've had to adjust in the way where I'm eating a little bit more and I'm eating more protein and more fat. Maybe I would do two tablespoons of hemp seeds in a smoothie. Normally, now I do four. So it's really just about... Whoa, wild. But no, it actually hasn't been hard. And I know that a lot of people have messaged me and reached out and said, Hey, I'm vegan or vegetarian. I went to my first

**DANIELLE BROWN:** doctor's appointment being pregnant and my doctor told me I have to eat meat again, or I have to incorporate fish or eggs or some kind of animal product because I'm pregnant. And you know, I'm not a doctor, obviously, anything related to your diet, make sure you consult with a doctor or dietician, but it is possible and 100% healthy to be vegan or vegetarian while you're pregnant. If you look at places like India or even places like China, a lot of people are 95%, even 100% plant based and they're getting their protein from legumes. They're having things like beans and lentils. A lot of Asian countries, they're getting a lot of their protein from soy. So soy milk, edamame, tofu,

**DANIELLE BROWN:** all of these amazing forms of whole organic soy. And so if you are educated and you know how to have a healthy, well balanced, well planned plant based diet, it is 100% safe and extremely healthy in pregnancy. So I would say first what people struggle with is protein or they think that they're not going to be able to get enough protein on a vegan diet. It can be as easy as adding a scoop of protein powder into your morning smoothie. It can be making a tofu scramble for breakfast. It can be making lentil bolognese. So instead of doing a meat bolognese, I use lentils and make like a delicious lentil based pasta sauce. It can be nuts, seeds. My husband really likes seitan,

**DANIELLE BROWN:** which is made out of wheat, super high protein. There are options and they have so many amazing vegan meats now that are actually like a lot healthier. I'm personally not the biggest fan of like fake processed meat. I'd much rather have a black bean burger or a tofu stir fry over fake meat. But one of my favorite vegan meats is called daring and they make a really good vegan chicken. So I'll do a salad with some daring vegan chicken on it and it's delicious. So if you have the list and you can even keep a list on your phone so that when you go to the grocery store, you're prepared of plant protein options and then fats like nut butters, nuts, seeds, like chia seeds, hemp seeds,

**DANIELLE BROWN:** flax seeds, pumpkin seeds, sesame seeds, sunflower seeds. All of those are so amazing for pregnancy. And because you're developing a baby and you're growing a human, adding those extra fats are really, really important for baby and your hormones and baby's brain development. So prioritizing those healthy fats, eating a lot of fruits, veggies, obviously in the first trimester, it's super hard. Eat whatever you want, eat whatever feels good. Once you're feeling good

again, you can focus on nutrition. But I've been vegan my whole pregnancy. The baby's been measuring ahead this whole time. He's thriving. I found out yesterday he is two weeks ahead of schedule. So he's in the 80th percentile. So

**DANIELLE BROWN:** I am glad that I can be an example and show that the baby's doing great. I'm doing great. My blood pressure is normal. I am not anemic, which one third of pregnant women ended up with anemia. It's very common. I'm getting enough iron. And I've had no other issues when they've taken my blood work multiple times. Everything's been perfect. So I just like to put it out there that if you want to eat plant-based or if you already are, don't worry as long as it's well-planned and you're getting a mix of fats, protein, carbs, just like you would on another diet, it's very possible and you can have a healthy pregnancy.

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** I mean, I don't know how they do it, but elephants are herbivores and their babies are about 240 pounds and three feet big. So it's definitely possible. It's not out of the realm of possibility. And we have so many different foods available to us and interesting new innovative ways to use those foods. It seems like if you know what you're doing, you can get all your nutrition. As you said, good to talk to a doctor, good to talk to a midwife or a nutritionist. But I dislike when someone tells a vegetarian or vegan, oh, now you're going to start eating meat because you're pregnant. That comes from a place, I believe, of caring, but also ignorance. All right, birth. You're going

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** to have a baby in a not too distant future. What have your experiences, thoughts, feelings about birth been and have they changed at all and how have they influenced your plans?

**DANIELLE BROWN:** I think that before I was pregnant, there was a massive fear around giving birth that I think a lot of women have. I think just because of the way birth is portrayed. grade in TV and movies. It's always very like hectic. And I just picture the classic like, Oh my God, my water broke. And the husband's like, Oh my God, we have to take you to the hospital. And then they rushed to the hospital and she's like going crazy in the car. And then, you know, they get to the hospital and she needs the epidural. She's screaming bloody murder. And it's like this whole hectic, scary thing. It looks, you know, what could possibly go wrong? Yeah. And I think that a lot of women are very scared

**DANIELLE BROWN:** of giving birth. I was one of them, but going through pregnancy and carrying a child for nine months, pregnancy is really hard. And although my pregnancy has been healthy, it's still been really difficult. I was super sick. I was insanely nauseous. I threw up every morning until I was 32 weeks pregnant. I've had pelvic discomfort. I've had a lot of sleepless nights. I've had really, you know, I've had bad heartburn, which I actually have gotten rid of at this point, which I can touch on later, but pregnancy is really, really, really hard. And it takes a lot out of you. And my mindset has kind of shifted and been like, if I could do this for nine months and gone every day with

**DANIELLE BROWN:** symptoms and discomfort and pain and throwing up and nausea, I can do one day of giving birth. Like I can do it. I don't think that's going to compare to going through nine months of pregnancy symptoms. I've also been taking hypnobirthing classes and I also have a doula and having a doula I think is one of the most life changing things because one, she's a birth educator. She

answers all of my questions and it's the support outside of the OB office that I don't think that women get enough of because your OB, unfortunately, they're super busy. They don't have time to sit with you and answer 10,000 questions. Maybe two while you're sitting there for the 10 minutes

**DANIELLE BROWN:** that you speak to them in the appointment, but you can't just call them or text them and ask them a million questions and have like daily consultations and tell them all your symptoms and have them educate you on everything. It's just not the way things work. So having her has really helped ease my anxiety and knowing she's going to be by my side during birth has been really comforting for me. Her educating me on what my birth options are, the things that you can advocate for yourself in the hospital and her telling me, oh, by the way, the hospital will make it seem like this isn't optional, but it is. And you actually have a choice in this and this is your birth and you can make it whatever you want it to be.

**DANIELLE BROWN:** And you can customize your birth to however you want it to go. And of course, things don't always go according to plan, which you know best on part two of everyone's episodes. I'm sure you hear how everyone's birth pretty much changed from what they originally wanted. But the fact that she educated me and told me you can go in with your preferences and you can be your own advocate at the hospital that really comforted me and made me feel better. So having her has just really changed my mindset. I took hypnobirthing classes with her. Basically, if people don't know what hypnobirthing is, my understanding of it and what I've gained is that it's learning how to relax and achieve this state of relaxation in birth to distract you

**DANIELLE BROWN:** from pain or pressure as they want to call it and kind of put yourself in this meditative state in order to lessen pain or lessen stress and to keep yourself as calm as possible. And that birth really doesn't have to be as painful as they say it is. So I've been practicing all of my meditation and relaxing and being able to quickly get into a calm state because that's really hard for me. I'm very ADD relaxing and just like turning my mind off is super hard. So I think hypnobirthing really has taken the fear out of birth for me and learning about it. It's that birth is normal. Our bodies were made to do this and your body has this instinct. Was it you telling me about the elephant giving birth? Yeah, you were

**DANIELLE BROWN:** telling me that no one talked to this elephant beforehand and gave them a consultation and this elephant didn't listen to any birthing podcast or go to any classes. But somehow this elephant gave birth and everything was

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** fine. So no, she turns around and does all the neonatal care. You know, she looks, she assesses the baby. It's very deliberate. She assesses the baby if something's wrong, she takes a corrective action. Again, everything that a doctor without a partner without a midwife without a doula without anything they know and we know to you know to women know human women's know to it's all very hard wired into your system into your DNA. And I'll tell you one other thing, observations of a male doula, right? You are young, strong, and healthy. Elephants don't have a neocortex. They don't have the part of the brain that rationalizes and thinks and plans ahead. They react to what they're feeling, and the reactions are hardwired with that innate wisdom

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** that everybody is born with. And your innate wisdom would guide you through a pretty cool birth if you didn't have that part of your brain that was always thinking,

wondering, rationalizing, and reacting. And you've already said that part of your brain is poisoned. You go in with a lot of fear from the things that you've seen in TV, the things that you've seen in movies, the horror stories that people love to talk about with their own birth experiences. And it's very hard for a human not to bring that into your experience. And getting rid of the fear of birth or minimizing it is so profound by observation. Again, observations of a male doula. You'll see

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** birth being intense. It's always intense. I've never seen it not be intense. But the intensity is a combination of sensations. There's pain, there's pressure, and there could be pleasure. But what actually makes it to your brain is going to depend on where your nervous system is operating. Do you feel safe? Do you feel in danger? So, if you're in that danger mode of nervous system operation, the fight or flight mode, like the same reaction to being chased by a tiger, you know what happens. Your heart beats differently. You breathe differently. You tense up your whole body. You lock your jaw. You hold your breath, and you fight. But in this case, you're fighting yourself, and you're making it

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** much more intense than it needs to be. And when you're fighting a tiger, you become hypersensitive to anything that could be danger for you. So, your actual skin, your sensations on your skin, anything that you feel is magnified so that you can immediately react in that survival mode. So, when you start to feel the intensity, the pain, the pressure, the pleasure, and you're feeling pain, that pain gets magnified. So, it races to your brain in a way that says, danger, danger, danger, and there's no chance of feeling any pleasure at all. The opposite could be true as well. If somehow you go into labor and you feel safe and excited and confident and like, I don't get to do this very often.

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** I want to feel my birth. I want to feel my labor, my baby coming through my body into the world. And I want to do this together with my baby. Don't forget, this is not just a you thing. This is a dance that you do together. One of the coolest things you can ever do with a kid, right? I want to feel that. I want to be present, and I'm not afraid of it. If your nervous system buys into that, if you can shut that neocortex down with saying, oh my God, oh my God, oh my God, and sink into that hard wiring that the elephant sinks into as well, then you will feel some pain, but it's not a danger pain. It's a labor pain, and it's a productive pain, and it's a tolerable pain. And the

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** more you surrender into it and relax without fear, the more you can open up and you just notice that it's there, but it doesn't bother you. You don't react to it by fighting it. And eventually you start to feel because the hormones in that setting, the hormones that start to come out, the oxytocin, which drives labor and makes your uterus contract, but is also the love bonding and orgasm hormone, will start to rise in your bloodstream, and you'll start to feel the intimacy just like by conception. And the more you open yourself to that and take yourself away from I'm in danger to I'm most expressive and thriving moment of my life, the more the pain will be in the background and the pleasure

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** will be accessible to you. And it just continues down that path. Obviously we're talking about no major complications come up, but it's hard to do all that in the modern birth setting with spotlights on you and random people coming and going and needles coming out of you and monitors all around you. That lends the neocortex to be like, we must be in danger, we must be in

danger. So it's hard to work around that. I think hypnobirthing and meditation in general are one of the ways you can kind of take your mind and put it, the focus, the spotlight where you want it to be. So I think that again, as a young, strong, healthy person, a person who's made some incredible changes in life, who's taken the

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** strength that you have and the desire that you have for improving your physical existence, I think you have a great shot at controlling your mind and allowing your birth to be

**DANIELLE BROWN:** what you want it to be. Also, I feel like it doesn't help me if I say I'm scared. What is that going to do? If I sit here, I'm like, I'm petrified, I'm so scared that I don't know what's going to happen. That doesn't help me. So I might as well just tell my s- yourself the opposite, even if maybe deep down it's like, maybe I'm a little scared, but I think your brain actually believes what you tell it. And I think your body believes what you tell it. So if I'm saying I'm not scared, everything's going to go well. I'm made to do this. I have a primal instinct to give birth. My body was designed for this. I might as well tell myself all of those positive affirmations and go in without a fear mindset because it can only help me.

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** Yeah, I mean, time will tell. We'll do the post-birth podcast and find out how it actually went for you. But I think all the potential's in your corner. And 98% of the hold back is really what's going on in the mind more than what's going on with the body. Your body took that sperm and egg and made a very healthy baby with all the parts and all the right places. And it knows how to bring the finished product through the mail slot. But it's always intense. And I ask people all the time, how do you want your labor to go? And they go fast and easy. I'm like, okay, but if you were going to hike Mount Everest, if you're going to climb Mount Everest, how would you like that to go? And the answer

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** can't be fast and easy because it's not. Practically speaking, you want to succeed, you want to make it to the summit, you want to get there healthy. And people love it, even though it's very intense and hard. It's labor. But you know, if your nervous system's in the right place, it can be a really incredible, enjoyable experience. And in the end, it sounds like your plan, quote unquote, is that you're going to give birth at the hospital with a doctor and your partner and a doula. And you're going to try to do it with minimal fear and maximal strength and health.

**DANIELLE BROWN:** Yes. And I still don't know if I'm going to get an epidural for some reason. That's everyone's burning question. When I talk to them about birth, friends, family, are you going to get an epidural? And then when I share and I'm like, well, I don't know. They're like, but why? Like, why wouldn't you just get one? You don't need to be a hero. It's the best thing and you won't feel pain. And I'm like, but I've never gone through this. So I don't know what it's going to be like. I've only heard other people's experiences. I could get there and be like, you know what? I can do this. I'm not overwhelmed with pressure or pain. I really feel like I can manage this on my own, or it could be the

**DANIELLE BROWN:** opposite. And I could be like, you know, I really need some help from an epidural. And I'm just going to go with the flow and just listen to my body. But I'm not going in with a decision about what I'm going to do just because I've never done this before. And I don't think it would be fair to make up my mind beforehand.

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** It's the best approach to go and open minded and see how it is. It's brand new. You know, I remember the biggest test I took in my life was part four of the chiropractic national board exam. And it was such a different test to any other test that I think as we got closer, I had these like almost nightmares about I'm so under prepared for this. I'm going to be terrible. I'm going to fail because it was so unknown. Like the brain can't. And we do these before and after birth stories to sort of help people have an idea of what other women learn from going through the process that they couldn't have learned otherwise. But in reality, until you get there, you have no idea. So I think the open plan is a

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** great one. And any of the interventions are there not only if you need them, but if you want them. And that's a game time decision that only you can make and whatever choice you make is the right choice.

**DANIELLE BROWN:** 100%

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** Danielle, I could talk to you for hours, honestly, and I'm probably gonna go watch some of your videos and figure out what I can make myself to eat that's gonna make me feel great. But before we go, tell me about healthy girl kitchen in a couple of different ways. How can we consume your amazingness currently? And what do you have in the works?

**DANIELLE BROWN:** So I have hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of free recipes on my Instagram at healthy girl kitchen, tick tock at healthy girl kitchen on my blog, my recipe blog healthy girl kitchen calm, all free all the time, every day I'm posting content. But I also just came out with the healthy girl kitchen cookbook. So if you're a cookbook person, I am very proud of the cookbook actually have it right here. This is

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** Oh, my God, that looks amazing.

**DANIELLE BROWN:** Yeah. So if you're watching on video, this is the cookbook and there's over 100 plant based recipes in the book that are designed to make you feel amazing, energized, optimized digestion, prevent things like constipation, heartburn, and also help maintain a healthy weight. My recipes aren't like weight loss focused. But these are the recipes and this is the kind of food that I've been making for years where you know, I initially lost 20 pounds, it just kind of came off. And they're all gluten free optionally, and a lot of people are gluten free, they all can be adjusted, customized. But on the other hand, they're all super easy. You don't have to be an expert in the kitchen, you don't have to have

**DANIELLE BROWN:** prior experience to make the recipes in the book. And they're all super accessible and the ingredients are accessible. So there's no crazy herbs that you have to go foraging for. There aren't any niche brands that you need to look out for. It's all simple fruit, vegetables, pasta, bread, beans, tofu, things that you can find in any grocery store, nowhere fancy, just your normal store. And the recipes that taste amazing and make you obsessed with eating healthy. That's my goal. So I'm already obsessed with it and I don't do it yet. So yeah, I love the idea of the cookbook. I'm going literally right now to preorder your cookbook. When does it deliver? So you can preorder it on Amazon. If you just type in healthy girl kitchen on Amazon,

**DANIELLE BROWN:** it'll come up Barnes and Noble anywhere books are sold. And then I can also send you that

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** link. Yes, I can put all the links on the show notes, but I'm going to order it right now. It comes out May 16th officially. That's one day after my wife's cookbook. Okay. Our kitchen is going to fill up. I'm going to order it right now because everything I said is a hundred percent true. I love the way you present what you do. I love the fact that I could go into any store and just buy it. Like you think about vegan eating oddly as being extremely expensive and the way you do it, it doesn't have to be. It's just normal ingredients to get at a typical grocery store. You don't have to go to a fancy place to get things that are out of reach. And also I love the idea of being able to take

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** it and flip through the pages and okay, let's try that. Sometimes I find, although I love them and I'm obsessed with watching your videos, it's like, how do I figure out which one I'm going to start with? And I think for me in the cookbook form, that'll be a lot easier. So I am very excited for the healthy girl kitchen cookbook. And hopefully when you come back for your after story, I will tell you about some of the great recipes I've been making and eating and thriving with. And if I lose 20 pounds, hallelujah.

**DANIELLE BROWN:** Let me know. And then also, I just want to say the meals in the book are realistic for everyday life. So I am not a chef. I will never claim to be a chef. I'm just a girl who likes to cook and cook healthy food. So everything is just realistic for the busy mom. Even if you're going to school, if you have a house full of kids, if you have literally zero time, the recipes are just super, super basic, simple, and you're not sleeping away all day in the kitchen, which I want to say too, because I think a lot of cookbooks, it's like you open the page, there's a ton of ingredients, a ton of instructions. It's going to take three hours to simmer roast, whatever. Everything's really, really easy. And these are also

**DANIELLE BROWN:** recipes I've made and have been eating throughout my whole pregnancy to keep me healthy and to make sure I'm getting enough protein, fat, carbs, and all of the right

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** balance of foods on a plant-based diet. Daniel, I'm so grateful for you for joining us today, sharing your wisdom and your personal, very, very real, broad personal story for how you got to where you are today, both professionally and personally. I very much look forward to having you back to find out how the rest of the story went, I'm sending positive, positive birth vibes for you and that you should have a great experience. And also I recommend watching one of the films we have up is called, Uninformed Pregnancy Plus is called Orgasmic Birth. And it's an older film that's really just coming into its time right now, because a lot of the empowerment is coming back into the

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** birth experience and people have more open minds to the birth experience. And for every story or TV dramatization that you've seen that puts fear into you, I think Orgasmic Birth will go the opposite way and show you a different side of what birth could be like. And all in all, I just know that all the work that you've put into the world, helping people improve their lives and improve their health, mother nature owes you. And so I hope she delivers as you deliver. One more time, where can we find you online? You can find me anywhere. Just look up Healthy Girl Kitchen. All my handles on social media are at Healthy Girl Kitchen. I love how you got them all. Most people have like eight different,

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** it's healthy dash underscore whatever tilde kitchen. You got them all. Good for you. We will see you there online. And if you want to check out any of our media related to pregnancy and birth and all these great new birth films and not just films, but video content in general, including mind and body, like yoga workouts, pre impersonal fitness programs and meditations, visit informedpregnancy.com.


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