Kara Sutton: Before Birth

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IN THIS EPISODE

At 39 weeks and two days, award-winning brand strategist Kara Sutton sits down with Dr. Elliot Berlin, DC to look back on a motherhood journey that began with a blissfully unresearched first pregnancy and an emergency cesarean, continued with a planned cesarean in the thick of COVID, and was reshaped by a miscarriage that unexpectedly restored her trust in her body — and to talk through how she is preparing, with a VBAC-supportive doctor, a doula, and a 12-week Bradley Method course behind her, for a vaginal birth after two cesareans with her third daughter.

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DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Welcome to the Informed Pregnancy and Parenting Podcast. I'm your host pregnancy focused chiropractor, Dr. Elliot Berlin. My guest today is a Southern California native, and she's preparing for the birth of her third baby. She's an award-winning brand strategist who, while growing her career, simultaneously experienced a journey through motherhood that is a powerful showcase of female strength and resilience. We'll talk about her previous pregnancies and birth experiences and her wish for a vaginal birth after two cesareans any minute. Kara Sutton, welcome to the podcast.

KARA SUTTON: Thank you for having me. What an introduction.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah, I'm known for my introductions. I mean, I could have gone on for hours about you, but let's jump right in. First of all, how many weeks are you now?

KARA SUTTON: I'm 39 weeks and two days.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I mean, I'm feeling contractions when you say that, cramping.

KARA SUTTON: Very pregnant.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah. Wow, 39 weeks and two days. Let's go back to the beginning. You're Southern California. Where did you grow up?

KARA SUTTON: Born and raised in Orange County, and then went to USC for college and have been in LA for the past 10 and a half years or so. Yeah, and just never left.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: What'd you study?

KARA SUTTON: I studied communication at the Annenberg School of Communication at USC.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Are you a very good communicator?

KARA SUTTON: I don't think so, but I am good at communicating on behalf of brands.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Ah, okay. So then what did you do right after graduation?

KARA SUTTON: Started working at TBWA Chiat Day, which is a famed LA ad agency that was sort of known for doing the Apple ads, those famous 1980s Apple ads. So yeah, worked there, thought I'd have a really big career right out of college and was answering the phones for a bit, so that was fun.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Well, that's communication.

KARA SUTTON: Yes. I was great at directing calls and accepting packages, so very humbling position, but it gave me a lot of access to seeing all the different roles within branding and advertising.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I mean, as you were answering phones and accepting packages, was it growing on you like, yes, this is definitely what I want to do? Did you hesitate?

KARA SUTTON: I loved it and I loved the creativity and the energy of it. And then I went into media buying and planning for CBS Television. So they were a client of one of the media buying arms of the agency, so I really enjoyed it a lot and I loved all the different people that I was meeting. So yeah, so fresh out of college, I kind of stuck with it.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Well, I sort of feel like your work on Apple has taken off. Brand awareness is high.

KARA SUTTON: Thank you so much. Stocking up.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: It's great. If anybody's looking for branding, you have clear success.

KARA SUTTON: Mastered it.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Now where has your career gone since then?

KARA SUTTON: I worked a little bit on Patron Tequila. I worked on Netflix. I did the advertising for Narcos and Stranger Things, Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt. Worked with Target for a long time on a couple of different fashion brands there. Started my own agency in 2019 called Always Friday, and then have most recently been working on a menopause brand that's at Ulta Beauty called Womaness. And so a bunch of different brands in between there, but I'll spare you all of the details.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Well, I mean, I've heard of all the companies that you mentioned. You've done well for everybody. And I'm trying to picture that all together, Patron and Menopause. I don't know how... It must all, and Kimmy Schmidt.

KARA SUTTON: It all comes together.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yes. All right. So along the way, you had some kids. Where did you meet your partner?

KARA SUTTON: I met my husband, Freddy, at the beach club in Santa Monica, 4th of July weekend.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Wait a second. The Annenberg Beach Club?

KARA SUTTON: The one next door to it actually, directly next door called The Beach Club, but that would've been really cool if I would've been -

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Continuing the Annenberg theme. Yeah.

KARA SUTTON: I met him there when I was 23. Things were high and tight, things were looking good. And yeah, we've been dating and together ever since then actually.

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

KARA SUTTON: Yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And as a kid, did you think about motherhood?

KARA SUTTON: Yes.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yes. You were one of those.

KARA SUTTON: I was one of those. I have always wanted to be a mom and I loved my baby dolls and babysitting my cousins and taking care of babies and would babysit. I nannied a little bit when I was answering phones at the ad agency to supplement my income. And I just always, always wanted to be a mom, so I was really excited about that.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: The Patron came later.

KARA SUTTON: Tequila came later.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And then what about Freddie? Was it a conversation early on?

KARA SUTTON: Yeah, I think he comes from a family, he's one of four boys, and I think that was always something that we wanted to... It was hardly even a discussion because I think we both just valued family so much and our siblings. And so yeah, it was clear from the beginning that we definitely wanted to have kids. But luckily, because I met him when I was 23, it wasn't something that needed to come up right away. Neither did marriage actually.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: He's one of four boys and you're one of...

KARA SUTTON: Three, one of three. I have an older sister and a younger brother.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, with a middle child.

KARA SUTTON: I'm really earning my keep.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, nice. Yeah, keeping the rep. Which one of four is he?

KARA SUTTON: He is the third in line of four.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Okay, so the second middle child?

KARA SUTTON: Yes. Kind of.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Okay, so the middle's attract. And then at some point you go ahead and get pregnant with your first kid.

KARA SUTTON: We got married first, yeah, but we did -

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Well, after that point.

KARA SUTTON: After that point, we got pregnant and I was really lucky. I got pregnant right away and had no issues during that first pregnancy and was 29. So on the west side of Los Angeles, it's like a teen pregnancy.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Seriously. Right. Poor thing.

KARA SUTTON: Yeah, I know. I was really solo though. I mean, it was awesome, but I definitely felt like I was the only person pregnant. No one in my friend group was pregnant, let alone married. So I definitely didn't have a big group of moms around me or giving me information for better or for worse.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Where'd you get support from?

KARA SUTTON: I don't know that I feel like in my first pregnancy I did a whole lot for support. I kind of just kept going, working and did a couple classes at the hospital, but I definitely didn't read a lot. I kind of had an ignorance is bliss approach to the pregnancy.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: For birth or pregnancy as a whole?

KARA SUTTON: I think both. I don't think that I went into the birth knowing anywhere near as much as I should have, but now that I'm older and wiser, I can say that. You don't know what you don't know. And I think I kind of thought that millions of women get pregnant and have babies, so it just is what it is, and that's all there is to it. I had no idea.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: But you plan to have the baby at the hospital, right?

KARA SUTTON: Yes.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: No, because some people don't because it could be a hospital, a birth center, home, strawberry field, whatever you want. You chose hospital with a doctor.

KARA SUTTON: Yes, at Cedars-Sinai with a doctor. Yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: So I don't want to put words in your mouth, but it sounds like the assumption was at some point you'll go to labor, go into the hospital and have your kid.

KARA SUTTON: Exactly. Yes. That is exactly what I thought.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And did you go into labor spontaneously?

KARA SUTTON: I did go into labor. I was a little past my due date, went into labor and went to the hospital and was just progressing very slowly. And so I let them break my water, and then I think from there it all went south in regards to the -

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Not north. Not like the baby was moving south.

KARA SUTTON: The baby didn't go south. The whole labor -

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: The experience went south.

KARA SUTTON: The experience went to literally.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, I speak French. Well, that sounds like an excellent point to take a break. Don't go anywhere. We'll be right back with the what she said show. Welcome back. We're talking to Kara Sutton, who you might remember from Apple. Anyway, moving on. When we last talked, she easily got pregnant with her first child, had a smooth, blissfully ignorant pregnancy, and the plan was go to the hospital and push your kid out. You went into labor, went into the hospital, and they broke your water. You were a little bit past your due date, and after you broke your water, you said it turned into a show of sorts. What happened?

KARA SUTTON: I mean that literally because they realized that the baby had gone to the bathroom in the uterus, and so there was some -

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: The first poop.

KARA SUTTON: On poop, there was some meconium. And then once that water bag was broken, her heart rate started to really decelerate and they were having a tough time getting it back. At that point, I'd already gotten an epidural, so I felt really helpless just laying there with a baby's heart rate decelerating, not able to move into different positions or do anything, and just kind of feeling really ignorant in regards to what was happening. A lot of nurses were rushing in, doctors were rushing in. It felt panicked on everyone's faces, and so it seemed like they couldn't get the heart rate back. People were pushing on my stomach, and I was like, "Are they doing CPR on the baby?" I don't even know if that's a thing, but that's where my brain went.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I mean, were there options at that moment?

KARA SUTTON: Not at that point. So once the bag was broken and my uterus was contracting and sort of pushing her out, the cord was around her neck and she just started to lose her heart rate. And so the doctor looked at me and just said, "We need to do a C-section right now." And because I had not read up on anything, I just was like, "Oh, okay. Yep, let's do a C-section." And so I was sort of Grey's Anatomy style, rushed down the hallway.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, hair blowing in the wind?

KARA SUTTON: Yeah, it was dramatic. It felt like everything you'd seen on ER and the cords are hitting you in the head and no one even stops because it's such a emergency. So it felt really not how I had envisioned my experience of labor going at all.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Well, just a few questions. Do you remember how dilated you were at that point?

KARA SUTTON: I think I was four or five centimeters dilated, so not very far along.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Second question, was your husband able to come with you right away?

KARA SUTTON: Yes, he was with me the whole time, which was nice. He looked really worried and scared. I think we were both just kind of shocked at how quickly things turned, went from laying there and being in labor to just being in the OR and bright lights and just was like, "Okay, I'm in surgery." So that was very scary.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I can't imagine the fear. What was it like physically, the surgery?

KARA SUTTON: I mean, I'd been on an IV for a while, so I was pumped full of liquids. I felt huge, and they move you off of your gurney type thing or whatever onto the operating table, and it's sort of like moving a small whale. And so they were like, "One, two, three, throw you onto the table."

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Hebo,

KARA SUTTON: Which really just feels like you really feel like a slab of meat just being thrown onto a metal table. And then it was kind of like, "Can you feel this? Can you feel that? Okay." And then I'm sure there was a knife in my stomach at that point. I was just like, "I can't feel it." And then yeah, they cut you open and I could see everything that was happening in the reflection of the glass thing that holds the baby.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, the little bassinet.

KARA SUTTON: Yes. So that was to the right of me, so I could really see all the incisions, which was wild. And then they took her out and it was just quiet in the room. And so the only thought in my head was like, "Oh, she's not alive." That's what I -

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh my gosh. No cry, you mean? There's no cry?

KARA SUTTON: There was no cry. No one was saying anything. No one was reassuring me that everything was fine or anything. So it just felt like you were in a car crash and you weren't sure if your passenger had made it, and you just were - It's the only way I can explain it. And I felt so helpless because you're just relying on that point at hoping everything's fine. So it was not great. Luckily, she's fine. There was no brain damage, nothing. It was a class two emergency, I guess, at a class three, the baby, or you don't make it, I think. And so yeah, it was scary, but she was totally fine. They stitched me back up. I just was so out of it from being on so many different drugs and wrapping my head around what had happened.

KARA SUTTON: So I was able to hold her as soon as they stitched me back up, basically.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: You're a very positive person. I love your sense of humor. I think you're funny and light, and I can feel the trauma in the situation coming through you, if I'm reading you right, and it's different than other people who wear their emotions on the sleeve.

KARA SUTTON: Yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: But this sounds like it was really, really hard for you.

KARA SUTTON: It's very, very scary. And yeah, I had never had surgery before, but nothing too traumatic has ever happened to me up until this point in my life. And so that was one of, I think, the scariest moments for sure.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Now, I have a gazillion questions about postpartum and feeding and motherhood, but we are on a schedule here with a mission. So at some point you have another kid. Did you achieve the pregnancy quickly again?

KARA SUTTON: Yes. Got pregnant again fast with my second one and was really excited. Found out it was another girl. We were in the midst of COVID, so it was the top of... I think I got pregnant in April 2020, so COVID had just hit in March, and I thought I was through or had processed the trauma of that first delivery with my first baby, but -

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: How much later was it, April 2020?

KARA SUTTON: A year and a few months. So my daughter was 13 or 14 months old.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Okay. And since then, literally, the world had just fallen into a panicky lockdown, doomsday situation, which I love that you just decided, "Oh, you know what? Let's have another kid."

KARA SUTTON: You know what? I gained eight pounds at the top of COVID with a lot of people, and I was like, "Let's just take this all the way." I was like, "Why stop here? Let's make this 40. Let's go for it."

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I love it. Once we're on roll.

KARA SUTTON: All social events are canceled. There's no weddings and photo moments, clothes to fit into, so got pregnant.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I mean, brilliant care. Brilliant. A lot of people didn't see it that way.

KARA SUTTON: Gainside, gain some LBs, bake a baby. What else am I going to do during COVID?

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: So smart. Okay, so you're pregnant and you're still traumatized from the birth. How did that express itself? What did you feel?

KARA SUTTON: I felt like the further I got in the pregnancy, the more real the idea of going back to that place of labor again and the possibility of it happening again or something going wrong started to really creep in. I started getting anxiety when I would think about the actual delivery and labor of the baby. I kept hoping that the further along I got in the pregnancy that I'd be like, "Okay, you can do

this." But that coupled with all of the craziness of 2020 and every day there was a new thing happening. My husband couldn't come to any of the appointments. You couldn't really have doula or extra people in the room, so I decided to plan a C-section and just have a surgery to remove the baby.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Is this to avoid having emergency surgery? Is this to just be more in control of the process?

KARA SUTTON: I think it was the latter, to be more in control of the process and to not worry, I guess, about something that could go wrong and have to experience that again. I had not fully, I think, worked through and let go of what had happened, and so it just seemed easier, which sounds bad, but easier with COVID to just have a date where I was going to be cut back open and have -

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I don't know. I think it sounds pretty logical. I don't think there's a wrong way to go there, right? It's just whatever feels best to you, and then we support the choice that you make.

KARA SUTTON: Right. And my husband was super supportive and was like, "Whatever you want to do, whatever feels comfortable to you, I'm on board with." And so I was due on Christmas, so I had to figure out scheduling that C-section with the holiday schedule of doctors, which was challenging. So I ended up having my second one on 12 / 22, so a few days before Christmas.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Wow. And how did the scheduled cesarean go?

KARA SUTTON: I mean, so different than the first, very regimented and planned, and you show up to the hospital at this time in the morning, and then you go into the operating room, and it's all very... It feels like, I guess, I don't know, but how it would feel to go into any planned surgery where you know the drill and people have talked to you ahead of time about what will happen and what you -

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Wait, you didn't get tossed onto the table like a slab of beef?

KARA SUTTON: No slab of beet, but your stable vibes was more like... Yeah, it was very civil and yeah, I mean, very sterile though in regards to a birth experience. It's also COVID, so you can't have any visitors and you've got your mask on and you're just on the table awake waiting for your baby to come out, I guess is how I would describe it.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Interesting. Yeah, I mean, COVID throws a monkey wrench into things for sure, but I think that there's a lot of ways to make your abdominal birth beautiful and magical, and it sounds like that just wasn't either something that you thought to do, wanted to do, or it just wasn't possible under all of the different circumstances.

KARA SUTTON: Yeah, I don't know. It just felt just very surgical, very like, "Okay, go in." I don't know, there wasn't a lot of emotion attached to it for me for that one. I don't know why, in regards to the actual, not the baby, but just the actual process of the delivery just felt -

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: The birth.

KARA SUTTON: Yeah, it felt like just like a surgery, I guess.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Did you feel any different afterwards in the recovery or in the bonding?

KARA SUTTON: No, I mean, the bonding was fine with both babies, and I was lucky to not have any postpartum depression or anxiety issues there, and they were both fine recovery-wise. I think you're sore and all the things, but I was up and around walking right away and sort of moving, and so I recovered from both C-sections pretty well, I guess as well as it can go. There were no outstanding issues or hemorrhaging or anything like that.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Okay. So then were you planning to have four kids?

KARA SUTTON: I don't think so.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, okay. But you were definitely planning for more than two?

KARA SUTTON: Yes. I wasn't on my brain at the time, but I mean, I thought maybe we'd be done at two, but then after the second, we did end up wanting a third a few years later once I'd gotten back to myself a little bit.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah, but there was no pandemic to camouflage.

KARA SUTTON: There's no excuse for the weight gain.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Okay. So then the third pregnancy, was that also fairly quick?

KARA SUTTON: Yes. I got pregnant in the fall of 2022, and I was excited, but I was also in the middle of throwing a big, big marketing event tour with Ulta Beauty across multiple states. And so it felt to me like I was excited, but I was also like, "Career-wise, this is a really tough time to be in the first trimester of a pregnancy where you're exhausted and sometimes throwing up and all of that." And so I was excited, but I ended up having a miscarriage at close to 12 weeks, actually.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I'm sorry, especially that's late.

KARA SUTTON: Yeah, it wasn't on my radar at all, especially because I'd never struggled with getting pregnant or keeping a pregnancy. So maybe I think I took that for granted a little bit and just, I don't know, it was not even really something I thought about. And then a few days before Halloween, I was actually dressed up like Elsa from Frozen, which was great. I had a miscarriage, but -

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: While you were dressed up like Elsa?

KARA SUTTON: I started cramping pretty badly when I was dressed like Elsa. And keep in mind I had two other little girls with me that are also dressed up like Disney princesses. So my husband was out of town, and so I just -

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh my goodness.

KARA SUTTON: Focused on making them dinner and getting them to bed. And then once I got them to bed, I just sort of knew what was happening and I got in the bathtub and just miscarried and pushed out the placenta.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, wow.

KARA SUTTON: Yeah. And it was weird, but it was also really healing for me. And I think one of the main things that made me want to do a VBAC and made me trust my body again. There was no part of me the entire time that I was cramping and having the miscarriage that was fearful. I knew it was happening and I trusted that my body was getting rid of that because it wasn't a viable pregnancy. It was painful and obviously sad, but it also felt like I trusted my body again.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Wow. I'm having so many different floods of thoughts and emotions. I cannot imagine anything about what that was like, and somehow empowering for you.

KARA SUTTON: Yeah, I don't know why that's my takeaway on it. That's I think strange.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: When you think about moms, sweet Jesus, Moses, Mohammed, all of them, how you fed your kids and put them to sleep and went into your bathtub to deliver essentially your miscarriage, and then also be like, "Yeah, my body's powerful and strong and now I trust her again." And your husband's out of town.

KARA SUTTON: Yes. And he was on an airplane, so I knew he was in the air. I didn't want to scare him with, "Hey, I'm having a miscarriage in the bathtub." So I waited until he landed and then was like, "Hey, don't freak out. Everything's fine." But honestly, I'm glad he wasn't there. I think he would've been like, "We need to call an ambulance because there's a lot of blood." And in a bathtub -

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: In the bathtub, yeah.

KARA SUTTON: A lot of blood. You can't see your legs because there's so much blood in you.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Well, it's a little bit like chocolate milk. Once you put in a couple of drops of Hershey's and stir, it's just chocolate. It's not milk anymore. So gross. Right?

KARA SUTTON: And that was wild. I mean, I could see the fetus in the -

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah, so you're not like a TMI kind of person, but my mind does curiously wonder, what do you do with that clump of cells/ So it

KARA SUTTON: Was really painful. I don't know who ever is like, "Oh, it's like having period cramps." It felt like heavy contraction. Your body's pushing something out. And then I just visualized the pain leaving my body. When I looked down, I had delivered the placenta at 12 weeks, and I started crying and I was really sad and just like, "This is gross." But I just held it and looked at it and then saw the baby in there or what would've been the baby, and then I just flushed it down the toilet.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I mean, it's fair. What are you going to do with it?

KARA SUTTON: I don't know. I had no idea what to do. I just kind of sat there. I was like, "Okay."

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: You know what I mean?

KARA SUTTON: Wow.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: My heart right now goes out to you so much, and I think you're incredible. I think all the moms are incredible, but you're just such a powerful, incredible person. If I launch a

giant brand, I'm definitely coming to hunt you down.

KARA SUTTON: You already have Informed Pregnancy Podcast.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: So this is not worthy of you. All right. Well, now you're pregnant again, so let's take a little break and we'll get into this pregnancy and what you're planning for birth in the next few days or so. Sounds good. We'll be right back. Welcome back to the Informed Pregnancy Podcast. We're talking to Kara Sutton. I know you embraced your body with that miscarriage, but have you more deeply embraced Frozen or is that now a dissociated princess for you?

KARA SUTTON: I find the strength in Elsa, and yeah, I have no hard feelings towards Frozen. It's still on repeat in the house.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: All right. Well, and here we are, you're building a new snowman, so to speak.

KARA SUTTON: Exactly, which is wild. I am due just two days after my miscarriage from last year.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Wow.

KARA SUTTON: So it's pretty full circle that I lost the baby and then got pregnant again in February 2023, and now I am due just a few days from when I lost the baby last year. So it just feels very, I don't know, it feels right, so it's good.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: With another quick conception?

KARA SUTTON: Yep.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Okay, so that's your thing.

KARA SUTTON: Hurtle, hurtle, according to my mother-in-law.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Well, according to everyone, really. Did you have in the first trimester any concerns, like anxieties about because you had had that miscarriage?

KARA SUTTON: No, but I will say I had a greater sense of gratitude for what was taking place after seeing what your body is doing in the first trimester when you're kind of ignoring it and you don't look pregnant and you're just moving through life, especially if you have other children. I had a definite sense of gratitude like, wow, I know a lot's happening there because I've seen what it's building.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: You're literally at that point. Wow. Yeah, I'd be afraid to go to my toilet, I think. I don't know. I'm such a weak person. Anyway, so pregnant quickly. And then now with this one, I mean, do you know what you're having?

KARA SUTTON: Yes, I'm having a third girl.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Another girl?

KARA SUTTON: Yes.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: So maybe there will be a fourth, maybe not. Who knows?

KARA SUTTON: I don't know.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: See how this one goes?

KARA SUTTON: Yeah, we'll see how this goes. We'll see how this goes.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: We can negotiate later. We don't have to. All right. So now you're planning VBAC after two.

KARA SUTTON: Correct.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: So many questions about that. Did you research risks and benefits? Was it hard to find support for VBA2C among medical staff? Do you have concerns about it? How do you feel if for one reason or another it turns into a third, a cesarean, I'll turn the floor to you?

KARA SUTTON: I decided I wanted to do a VBAC pretty early on in the pregnancy. Just felt like a third cesarean and reopening all of those same sort of scars would be not ideal. I started listening to a really great podcast called the VBAC Link.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Great resource.

KARA SUTTON: Great resource and just loved hearing other women's stories about it and having VBAC and VBAC specifically after two cesareans and how it went. And they also have a great Facebook community too, and Instagram with just lots of info. And I felt pretty empowered hearing all of that. So yeah, I read a lot. And then my friend who had a VBAC said that she had found a doctor who was really known for VBACs.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: The VBAC king.

KARA SUTTON: The VBAC king, Dr. Brock at Cedars. So I went to him and was like, "Hey, I'm pregnant and what do you think about VBAC?" And he's like, "Oh, here's the risk goes up with each VBAC. The most I would do is a VBAC after two cesareans. And so I think you're a good candidate. You are healthy and young and I think you're fine to do it."

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Good sense of humor. It helps. It helps.

KARA SUTTON: Yes. You laugh a lot. Anyways, so I was like, "Okay, so we're going to do this." So then once I decided that I was going to do it, I kind of went full into it, got recommended to you, started listening to the podcast, started reading Ina Mae's books on... Yeah, went deep, went full bore.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: So are you thinking about doing unmedicated?

KARA SUTTON: Yes, I am.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Okay.

KARA SUTTON: I mean, that's the goal. I would like to have an unmedicated as low intervention as possible birth. And part of that is because when I had that first emergency C-section, I think I mentioned once the baby's heart rate started decelerating and I'd already had the epidural, I just felt

so helpless. I couldn't get up and move into a different position or walk around or change positions to get the weight off of the baby. I just felt insanely dependent, which I hate, on the medical staff to just figure it out. I ideally would like to not be in that situation ever again and feel a sense of control or sense of empowerment, I guess, to be really a part of it.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Are you concerned about the intensity of flavor? I mean, you had some before your first epidural.

KARA SUTTON: I'm not concerned about it. I think that it will probably be painful, and I think that if I ultimately want or need to get an epidural, that won't be a failure in my brain, but I guess I'm just going to go in with the idea that I can do this and that everything I need to have this baby is in me and that I can... I know a lot more now than I did, I guess, with the first one. I also have a really great doula, Leah Bergquist from Your Natural Birth. She's great. And so I've made my husband do a 12-week Bradley Method course with me. So he's very well versed in my vision.

KARA SUTTON: So yeah, I think I can say with all confidence that I've done everything possible to set myself up for hopefully a great experience that goes well and doesn't result in a C-section. With that being said, there's so much that could happen and we don't know.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: So a few things. Number one, Dr. Brock doesn't require epidural for VBEC after two?

KARA SUTTON: I don't think so. We definitely haven't discussed that.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Okay. He may not. I know he does for breach, but I don't know if he does for VBAC or VEC after too. Next question is usually people go into a birth with some combination, just by observation, some combination of excitement and anxiousness. Are you feeling any of that?

KARA SUTTON: I'm feeling only excitement and I don't know why. Maybe the anxiousness will kick in when I'm actually having the contractions, but -

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Could be the adjustments.

KARA SUTTON: It's probably the adjustments. I feel good. I feel not anxious. I feel just really excited to experience... There's so few things in life that are actually a new experience truly. And so this is something that I'm excited for and I think I can do and watch me come back and record this podcast and be like, "No, it didn't go well."

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: No, I think it's going to go amazing however it goes, is how I feel. I think you have a great open mind and a great plan, and you're surrounded by wonderful people, and I think you'll have a great birth, whether it'll be cesarean or vaginal remains to be seen. But I think you have everything going for you. So if I had to bet a dollar, I would bet in your favor and feel good about my bet.

KARA SUTTON: I feel like there's a sense of determination there too with women who are going for VBAC where you're really going in trying to make something happen a certain way. So yeah, we'll see.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And it's not COVID now, so you get to bring people with you.

KARA SUTTON: Cameras.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: The whole crew. Yes. So I guess towards the closing, I know Ainame points out a lot about how birth, the scene, the setting, everything around you affects you, and some of the things that you do put you in more of an adrenaline kind of fight or flight response. Some things put you more in a Pitocin-y sort of pleasure response. Are there things that you are deliberately doing to trigger the latter, more of a oxytocin driven, pleasure hormone driven pregnancy, just in terms of what you might wear, who's going to be around you, what kind of lighting, what kind of sense? Are those things that you're considering?

KARA SUTTON: Yes. I am going fully into the mind space of ideally what would be a nice birth experience. So dimmed lights, asking for low voices, bringing an eye mask. I think I'm going to attempt to just very much go inward essential oils and really just focus on laboring and all of that to shut out as much of the hospital vibe as possible, I guess.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Do you see a specific role for your husband and for your doula?

KARA SUTTON: Yes. I think my husband is there for counter pressure and to support me and knows me really, really well, so to help read my emotions. I think the doula is there to help suggest other positions or to suggest other ways of managing the pain if relaxation isn't working, but other maybe potential positions. So she's the pro in that space, and so I would trust her, I guess, with those types of suggestions to try to make it all happen.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Which oils will you bring?

KARA SUTTON: I was actually just on Amazon right before this, just looking around. I think I'm going to bring lavender for relaxation and peppermint for energy, and I don't know, maybe a few others. I could do an orange zest potentially.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah, citrus. I like citrus to add to that mix.

KARA SUTTON: Citrus. Yeah, I could do that. Get down doTERRA or something, and so I'm good.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh yeah. DoTERRA also has one called Balance and one called Elevation. They can play a nice role in how you feel.

KARA SUTTON: Okay. That's a good one for me to get.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: What's on the playlist?

KARA SUTTON: I'm going to make two. I think one is going to be high energy, like Jay-Z vibes.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah. I assume that's what he had in mind when he made his music.

KARA SUTTON: He definitely wanted his gangster music to me.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yes. Be back.

KARA SUTTON: Be back, baby. So I think I'll have one that's more of how I have workout playlists or I ran a half marathon and it was high energy vibes like that. So I'm going to do one like that, and then the other one is going to be more chill, relaxing style music. But I'm afraid that might annoy me. That's why I'm making two, because I could see that bothering me. I don't know why.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Do you want to build this? No, man. I don't know if this is too short. Okay, so I can just come serenade you. I think that my observation is on the earlier part of labor, people like to listen to empowering music that has lyrics that are familiar to them, and you can sort of sing along with it, and it has messages for you that are, "I'm strong, I'm healthy." Towards the middle, and everyone's different, just food for though, sort of meditative music. I've seen everything from African drumming, just hours of African drumming, to let your conscious mind shut down and go into that limbic part of your brain that you give birth from, or something just repetitive, like the doors just going on and on.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And then for the third part is sometimes where I think that the more energy music might come in, like at the end of a non-externally medicated birth, I only say that because you make a ton of your own meds in your body that are very cool, and if you could bottle them and sell them would probably do really well. And at the end, sometimes if it's been a journey, energy's low. And so to put on the faster track, I've seen people... One of the more comical ones was someone who, she looked like she had zero energy left to move a muscle, and it was time to push, and they put on a salt and pepper.

KARA SUTTON: Like push it?

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Push it, exactly. At first, her fingers started to move around, and then her whole hand, and then she got up and she was moving around, and I was like, "Push it real good." I'm like, "Okay, makes sense." Yeah. Anyway, I don't know if that's the first one.

KARA SUTTON: No, that's helpful. I think it's helpful to think of it in stages for sure like that, so that by the time I'm in the third stage, it's that high energy.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And you just have options. I would add something else to that list, which is some standup comedy, because you do have such a good sense of humor, and if fear does kick in, you can't really be laughing and afraid at the same time. It's a great way to tell your body, "We're not in danger. This is intense, but we're not in danger."

KARA SUTTON: Right.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And then -

KARA SUTTON: I take a notepad right now. It says African drumming comedy.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yes. Yeah. Somebody finds that elevation, balance, and no frozen. Although I did a frozen parody for labor and delivery.

KARA SUTTON: You did?

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah. You want a little taste of it?

KARA SUTTON: Yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: It goes like this. Let it go. Let it go. Don't hold on anymore. Let it go. Let it go. Relax your pelvic floor. I don't care as long as I don't care. You did this to me. I'm not talking to your mother anymore. Something like that.

KARA SUTTON: You need to get that trademarked ASAP. That is what they should be teaching in these Disney movies for young girls, is those types of lessons.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: You and me both think that way. I guess my last piece here is, so in terms of if you're a runner, have you thought about what you want to wear? I always said if you're a runner, because one choice is the oversized unisex hospital mumo, which doesn't make most people feel very empowered.

KARA SUTTON: Yes, I'm not wearing that.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: But as a runner, sometimes athletic-y people like to wear athletic clothing. You look yourself in the mirror and you're like, "I'm strong."

KARA SUTTON: I'm going to be wearing a sports bra because this is a nice event and something comfortable, but I don't know what yet. I haven't found the outfit. I've found a great newborn first look outfit, and then I haven't figured out. But I do know I definitely don't want to wear the hospital gown because I agree with -

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, suggestion?

KARA SUTTON: Yeah, please.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Sundress.

KARA SUTTON: A sundress. That doesn't feel empowering to me. That feels like dainty.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: No? Oh, I don't know. I think that if you feel like you look good in it and you look in the mirror and you're like, "Wow, I look good. I'm strong, positive, healthy." Not sick, not dependent. But the reason I say sundress is because if it has an effect on you, then it could be a good choice. If it makes you feel dainty, then no. But it has access for anything they need to do or if you have monitors on you or anything like that.

KARA SUTTON: A chic linen. I could see a chic linen moment could be good.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yes. I feel like a line is developing right now in your mind to precede the menopause line.

KARA SUTTON: Yeah, exactly. A chic V-bag, short, sort of breezy linen, slightly utilitarian dress that I could look good in in a favorable color and also deliver a baby in.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yes. I've also seen paired with the sports bra, like a little tennis skirt.

KARA SUTTON: That's cute. I could get into that.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I couldn't get into that, but it's not about me.

KARA SUTTON: Yeah, I would actually probably have a hard time getting into it in this current body, but...

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: That's low under the belly. All right. Do you have a prediction? How big were your first two?

KARA SUTTON: They were tiny. 6'9" and 6'7" or so. So six pounds, seven ounces.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: What do you predict on this one?

KARA SUTTON: I think this one's a little bigger. I think seven pounds, two ounces.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, nice. Okay. I was going for an even 7. 0, but then it sounds like an earthquake. So let's go 7. 2. 7. 2. And then do you have any prediction, you're already 39 weeks and two days. Is anything happening yet? Is there any mucus plug or surges?

KARA SUTTON: No. Nothing. No action. Okay.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Have you been checked, like your cervix?

KARA SUTTON: I have an appointment tomorrow, but I might not do the cervical check. I might just...

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Wing it.

KARA SUTTON: Just might pass on that and see when this happens. I don't know. I don't know. I think maybe after Halloween, so maybe next week.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Okay. Do you have a costume for Halloween?

KARA SUTTON: I'm usually very creative around Halloween, but there's not a lot to do with this body right now. There is, but we are being witches. My four-year-old daughter, my two-year-old daughter, they're super into hocus pocus. They're going to be witches, and I'm just going to wear essentially a black mumu and call it a day.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I love it. Okay. It's my favorite costume. I think that's all the questions, Kara. Yeah. I really appreciate you. I love talking to you, and I'm inspired by you. I say that sometimes, not all the time, but I'm really inspired by you've been through a lot and you just have such a great attitude and energy. Oh, we're all going to get gushy. No, no, no. You hang up. Okay.

KARA SUTTON: No, stop it.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Thank you again, and I look forward to connecting with you after this baby comes, which maybe is tomorrow, and finding out the rest of this story.

KARA SUTTON: Awesome. Thank you for having me.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: My pleasure. And at home, thanks for listening to Informed Pregnancy. For more pregnancy, parenting, information, visit informedpregnancy. com.

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