Directing Your Own Birth with Rylee Ebsen

Episode 393 · February 8, 2024 · with Rylee Ebsen

IN THIS EPISODE

Writer and director Rylee Ebsen — granddaughter of Beverly Hillbillies star Buddy Ebsen — talks with Dr. Elliot Berlin, DC about planning her home birth the way she runs a film set: call sheets, a location-scout-style walkthrough with her midwives, and a manifestation list she read every day.

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

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Welcome to the Informed Pregnancy and Parenting Podcast. I'm your host, Pregnancy Focus chiropractor, Dr. Elliot Berlin. My guest today is a trailblazing writer and director with a comedic flair and a mother with a remarkable story. Her journey is a blend of creativity, unconventional choices, and resilience. We'll dive into her captivating narrative that redefines the experience of balancing a demanding career with the transformative path of parenting. Riley Jean Epson, welcome to the podcast.

RYLEE EBSEN: Dr. B, thank you for having me. I'm so thrilled to be here.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: It's such an honor to have you. I want to learn from your unique story and share your magic with the audience. Let's start at the beginning. Where are you from originally?

RYLEE EBSEN: I'm born and raised in Los Angeles, California.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Woo, I've heard of it.

RYLEE EBSEN: Woo.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And I said in the intro that you're a writer and director. Tell me about the trajectory to getting to that career.

RYLEE EBSEN: Yeah, I grew up with a Hollywood family. Both my grandfathers did acting, directing, writing. My mom's dad was this guy named Stan Freeberg, who was this comedian and satirist, and he inspired me so much in being a trailblazer in even the commercial space. He directed some of the

first funny commercials, and now as a commercial director, I feel very, very inspired as I look at his work now. And my dad's dad is Buddy Epson, who was Jed Clampet in the Beverly Hillbillies. And I always grew up loving old shows, Matlock, Murder She Wrote. I think I'm like a 70-year-old man inside when it comes to my comedic choices of films and TV shows because of both my grandfathers. They just had really unique taste.

RYLEE EBSEN: And so I grew up wanting to definitely do something in film. My dad is an editor, my mom is a writer, and it was just so clear that I wanted to be a storyteller. For a hot second, I thought I wanted to be in front of the camera. And then I think it was my grandfather actually, a buddy who was like, "If you direct, then you get to do it all because you love production design and you love wardrobe and you love writing and then you get to do everything." And I was like, "Yeah, that sounds good. Let's do that."

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: So you took a turn in the road.

RYLEE EBSEN: Yeah. And I started directing in high school at Crossroads and took a lot of film theory classes. And then I went to NYU to Tisch and have been directing for 10 years now.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I feel like, first of all, for one thing, the director has the coolest chair.

RYLEE EBSEN: Definitely. The coolest chair. Do we sit in it a lot? No. Do we actually get to experience the chair? I would say no. My dogs are always barking at the end of the day, but yeah, it looks cool from afar, definitely.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah. So I mean, there's that. Okay. So directing and a wee bit of comedy and you're very funny also. So it's cool to be able to find that. I don't know. I see the director is looking at all the moving pieces that are taking place, all the many people that come together for a production and sort of like the conductor of an orchestra, just moving that little baton around and making things happen.

RYLEE EBSEN: We constantly have to zoom in, zoom out, have the 40,000 foot view, have the 4,000 foot view. We have to be so collaborative, but we also have to know what we're doing. You plan for the day, you prep and prep and prep, but then you never know what's going to happen and it's so much like birth.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: What a metaphor. Okay. Well, let's move into that. Motherhood, are you someone who dreamed of motherhood as a child or something that came to you later?

RYLEE EBSEN: Birth has always been a hobby, I would say. I have known a lot about birth for no reason, just that I find it fascinating and beautiful. I would tell my friends growing up, "Did you know that the babies can crawl up your stomach to the breast as soon as they're born? And did you know that if they breastfeed, you give them antibodies, you read the type of illnesses that they might encounter, and then your body makes antibodies for those illnesses through breastfeeding?" And everyone's like, "Yeah, sure, whatever. This is very weird that you know all this."

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And this was like kindergarten. Okay.

RYLEE EBSEN: First grade. Yeah, exactly. I just was always fascinated by birth, the coming in, the morning of life. I just was really inspired what women go through, and I always wanted to know more about it. And so this journey of this last year has been so special because it's been my turn and it's something that I've always, always wanted.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: So your turn comes. How did you meet your partner?

RYLEE EBSEN: We met when I was 23 and now I'm 33. So we met 10 years ago and now we have a little boy to show for it.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yes. And was parenthood something you discussed together early on?

RYLEE EBSEN: We joked as you do when you're first flirting and going on dates, we'd have beautiful children together and then all of a sudden it doesn't become a joke anymore. You realize as you go through life, wait a second, I love you and I want to be with you and I want to create children with you and just progress from acute flirtation of, hey, kids are cute, to then, oh my gosh, we're doing this. This is full on. And fun fact, our son is actually the combining our two families in a way that our grandparents would be really proud of. His great-grandmother is Fanny Bryce, the Fanny Bryce, the original Funny Girl, and my grandfather's buddy. And Fanny and Buddy did a show together in Vaudeville.

RYLEE EBSEN: And actually my partner's mom found the Playbill where they're dancing together. So River, our son, is the combination of Bryce and Epson. So his name is River Epson Bryce, and I think Fanny and Buddy would be jazzed. They'd be jazzed to find out.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: At least jazz hand.

RYLEE EBSEN: Yeah, totally.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: That is the greatest story ever, and I feel bad about my own children now. Sorry, kids.

RYLEE EBSEN: I mean, they're all doing amazing. Some of them want to be in Showbiz.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: My kid's my youngest.

RYLEE EBSEN: You got chefs. Yeah, you got all the gamut.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah, he likes doing comedy with me. He always insists on coming to the show and doing a little set.

RYLEE EBSEN: I love your show so much. We both dabbled in comedy. I've done improv. I've also did a standup class during the pandemic, which was terrifying. I give you so much credit for doing the show.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, thanks. I can't wait to drag you into it.

RYLEE EBSEN: Definitely.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: All right, so you guys, I mean, conscious choice and now was a good time to have a kid.

RYLEE EBSEN: Yeah. Smoke them if you got them. The world is in crazy place and it felt like the right time.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Okay. And did it come quickly for you?

RYLEE EBSEN: It did. Not even really a though. Tuscany, Italy, relaxed, wine, just kind of go in the flow. Go on vacation is what I'll tell people.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Hold on, I'm just writing this down. Tuscany.

RYLEE EBSEN: Go on vacation. Don't worry about it.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Were you surprised that it was that quick?

RYLEE EBSEN: Yeah, definitely surprised. Absolutely. It's interesting. We do have this biological clock. I wrote a short film once about this girl who goes on a date and all she can hear is this ticking in her ear. And he's like, "So anyway, I grew up in Minnesota and it just gets louder and louder and louder." She's like, "I'm sorry, I'm having trouble hearing you. What was that again?" And she just can't stop hearing it, and it just puts so much pressure. And I think as women get into our 30s, we just start to think about that clock. And a lot of my girlfriends are starting to freeze their eggs and starting to think about, "Oh my gosh, I only have one follicle and I though I had a hundred."

RYLEE EBSEN: And I just think it's so important to know what your status is so that you're just prepared for however you want to have children, whether that's waiting or whether that's now or just know your options. I think information is key.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah. I feel that way also when I go to Subway, I didn't know you can get the whole wheat hoagie. Anyway, know your options is all I'm saying. They are not a sponsor. On that note, we're going to take a quick break. When we come back, we'll find out how your pregnancy went. Welcome back to the Informed Pregnancy and Parenting podcast. We're talking to Riley, Jean Epson, director, writer, comedian, mama. Okay, let's get to the mama part. So pregnancy, I mean, it's something that you were always interested by. How was it to live it firsthand?

RYLEE EBSEN: I know everyone has such a different experience. I was very lucky that I didn't have any morning sickness. I though I would have this beautiful glow. I didn't get the glow. I actually had crazy acne, so that was difficult because I was just waiting for my skin to be flawless. And every day I was like, "It's not pretty yet. Where is it? Hello." But yeah, I was so lucky to have a beautiful pregnancy. Every stage, it feels like a flow chart. And you and I talked about this, I think during one of our first meetings. It's like you want to get through the first trimester, then you want to get through the second trimester. You got to get through the 20-week scan. You got to make sure the baby's head is down.

RYLEE EBSEN: You go through all of these hurdles that you have to jump through. You got to do the glucose test, and at any point you could be informed that you need to make a different choice about your birth plan. So when I found you, which was magical that I found you at the time that I did,

because I was flailing a little bit towards the beginning of my pregnancy. I didn't have my team. My gynecologist had just retired and I was like, "Doctor, where'd you go?" And she'd been with me since I was 15, and so that was really hard to find somebody when I was newly pregnant. That interview process is always stressful when you have a baby coming. It would be a lot easier just to do interviews when you just want to find someone to cover you.

RYLEE EBSEN: But now I needed someone to actually be my birth partner. And I really looked at my OB as my birth partner, not just my care provider. I wanted someone who was going to be a partner in crime and who was going to think similarly and was open, but also was really talented at what they do. And so I found you at the perfect moment because I was totally lost and I had heard your name through the grapevine, and our first meeting honestly set me on the trajectory for my entire birth to go the way that it did because you were the inciting incident. You were the catalyst for all of the people that I ended up meeting and finding and working with.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Wow. It all started with wine in Tuscany, and then it took a big pivot with the grapevine in Los Angeles. Okay. I see a theme here.

RYLEE EBSEN: It took a big turn with Dr. B. Dr. B, you were everything.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: So I feel like you did most of the work just for the record, but okay, so you came in and you had a plan and we talked it through. So what was the plan? How did it change?

RYLEE EBSEN: I knew I wanted to have an empowered birth, whether that was at the hospital or at home, and I wanted to explore home birth. I think that a lot of people were pushing me to not even talk about it or think about it or even question it. Hey, is home birth possible? Is it an option? I was just really interested in having an empowered birth, whatever that meant. And so I did meet with a midwife who was less hospital focused, and she's perfect for certain people and is the right care provider, but for me felt a little bit too, because she didn't have hospital privileges, it just didn't feel like the right fit. So enter Naomi of the Los Angeles midwives and Lilit and Lindsay, and they were just the perfect team for me. And they came from you, Dr.

RYLEE EBSEN: B. They are so, so unique in that they're integrated. They love the hospital births and they love the home births. They are so smart and they have such a good intuition and they're cautious, but they're also confident. And I just feel like they set me up for success and put me in the right place, whether we wanted to go to Cedars or whether it was going to be at the house. Our plan was to do the home birth, but then obviously there was a flow chart of if things changed anytime along the way, we would then pivot to Cedars and have a backup.

RYLEE EBSEN: And I think they were really surprised and delighted at how prepared I was because when we did my home walkthrough, I kind of treated it like a location scout, which in the film world means you look at a location that you're going to film in and you look at the power situation and you look at the lighting of the day and you look at the weather and all the things and you plan your shots and you walk it through with your whole team. And so that's exactly what I did for my home birth. I handed out call sheets. I made call sheets for the home birth, which is a document that we use in film that has everyone's numbers on it.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: But it's such an efficient document. It has all the information you need all in one sheet organized so everybody can really get to the meat of it easily.

RYLEE EBSEN: Easily.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: It should be a call sheet in every birth plan.

RYLEE EBSEN: There really should be. It had the hospital route from my house to Cedars. It had beeper numbers, it had cell phone numbers. I had my backup doctor, Dr. Daniel Niku, shout out. He was so fantastic. He was my OB, my backup OB. He backed up the midwives and Naomi texted him the day that I went into labor and said, "Hey, are you around?" And he said, "Yes, I am." So they were always in communication, which is so beautiful. And I didn't know that by the way, and I'm glad that I found out after that he was just kind of in the peripheral and was ready if we needed to go there. And yeah, so the call sheet was just great because it had all the information. It had the parking on my street when street cleaning happens.

RYLEE EBSEN: It had all the things that the midwives might need. So it was my doula and Naomi and my partner and I at the walkthrough, and we just went through all the scenarios. We went through the stuff you need for the tub, you need all these connectors and things. And so it's very similar to film. You prep for everything possible, but then on the day, you never know what's going to happen.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: In retrospect, was that kind of directorial mind helpful for you?

RYLEE EBSEN: It really was because I prepped all the versions that could be. I really tried to prepare myself. I wanted a home birth. I wanted to manifest a home birth. I even wrote on New Year's Eve when I was four months, five months pregnant, I wrote out a whole manifestation list of the size of the baby, the home birth, what went down. He's small, he comes out easily, I don't tear. I just wrote it visually and I had it in my room and I looked at it every day. And I think that was really powerful because he was exactly under the weight that I said. I said under eight pounds, he was 7'4". We had a successful home birth, no tearing in the water on Earth Day.

RYLEE EBSEN: I mean, not that all manifestation works, but I do think that it's pretty powerful when you set your mind to it and you really visualize what you want and think about it often. It's not just writing it once, but looking at it and daydreaming about it over and over. So it's not just the directing mentality. I think it's kind of the will, the desire that you want. You have to speak it and you have to think it. And I think just doing that practice was very helpful for me as someone who does suffer from anxiety. I think it's helpful just to think through it over and over again.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: All right. So with that plan in mind, how did your labor start and where in relation to your due date?

RYLEE EBSEN: Well, I knew that I wanted to go into labor before 40 weeks because of the home birth situation. Most people are nervous to go over 40 and have a home birth. I know the midwives have their reservations and as they should because it just gets harder as you approach 42 weeks. So with that in mind, I also planned and prepped that as well. I did everything under the sun to get it going. So when it was safe to do so, at 30, I'd say six or seven weeks, I was doing, I mean, you could do the four dates a day, you do the raspberry leaf tea, doing the walks. Dr. Jason in your office was

incredible, and the acupuncture helped me so much.

RYLEE EBSEN: We started to ramp it up as the weeks went on, and I really think acupuncture was super, super important part of me going into labor when I did. Intimacy is really important. I ran into an amazing doula at your show, Hayes. We had this moment, I was 37 weeks pregnant, and she said to me, and it was so beautiful, the advice that she gave me was exactly what I needed in the moment that I needed it. She said to me, "Be juicy, be loving, make out, kiss each other, caress each other, fondle each other. The more that you guys are in love, that will bring the baby and it'll bring the baby safely." And I was like, "Wow, because I'm tired. He's tired. We're freaked out. We're waiting for this baby to fall into our hands."

RYLEE EBSEN: Every single person in our life is asking us, "When's the baby coming? When's the baby coming?" And the stress is starting, the pressure is starting. And just hearing that from Hayes, "Just be in your little love bubble and just make out." We took it to heart. We were like, "Hey, honey." I even said during labor, I was like, "Kiss me deeply. What do you mean deep? Kiss, kiss me."

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Be juicy.

RYLEE EBSEN: Be juicy. Make out with me. And he's like, "Okay, I'll try, but you're really in pain."

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Wow. Okay. So it starts...

RYLEE EBSEN: So I went into labor at 39 weeks on the dot. The day before, he came out on 39 weeks on the Saturday, and I went into labor Friday at 1:00 AM, and he came out at 1:00 PM on Saturday, exactly 12 hours later.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Your labor started at nighttime?

RYLEE EBSEN: My labor started at 1:00 AM nighttime. I went to sleep on Friday. It started at 1:00 AM on Saturday. And then later that day at 1:00 PM, he came out 12 hours later.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Okay. So you woke up just after midnight. And when you say it started, how did it start?

RYLEE EBSEN: It started full on, just so painful. I was dreaming that I was in labor, and then all of a sudden I woke up from a deep sleep and I was in labor. The feeling that I was having in this dream was actually real, and I was having an insane contraction, and I had just seen Jason the day before, and he even said to me, "Did you feel contractions last week a little bit?" I said, "Not at all. I'm not feeling nothing. Zero, zippo, nothing." So the acupuncture, I was just worried that it wasn't working, but for me, I guess it was more like a light switch. I didn't have any early labor. It was just full on right away. I tried to labor alone for an hour in the shower, but they got so intense that they took my breath away.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah, it never works out if you brime.

RYLEE EBSEN: Never.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: No, that's too intense with the rhyming. Okay, so now I have a fear that I'm going to have that dream where I'm free falling, and then I'll wake up and I'm going to be free

falling.

RYLEE EBSEN: And you are, like a Tom Cruise movie where you wake up and you're falling.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah, I just went off the cliff on my motorcycle.

RYLEE EBSEN: Yeah. Yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Wow. Okay. So nothing was really helping you, it sounds like.

RYLEE EBSEN: For pain?

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah. No.

RYLEE EBSEN: The shower made me feel a little woozy actually, because I was also very tired. I labored through the night. So I finally woke up my partner. I said, "Whoa, things are happening." He thought I was exaggerating. He just kept saying, "Come back to sleep, but you should sleep. They told us you should rest. You should get back in bed." I was like, "I can't lay down. I can't rest. I can't even pause for a moment." They were so close together and they were so intense from the second they started. So by 7:00 AM, I was like, "I must be 10 centimeters dilated. I have to be. I've been going since 1:00 AM. It's 7:00 AM, and I haven't had a moment of rest."

RYLEE EBSEN: I mean, we're talking every two to three minutes a contraction was coming, and it was very painful.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Were you in touch with your midwives at that time?

RYLEE EBSEN: I texted the group thread. We started a group thread right after the walkthrough, and I said, "They're taking my breath away." So my doula, shout out Mickey, incredible, Mickey Bell, also came from you, Dr. B. God, I love Mickey. And she came at 7:00 AM and checked me out. She didn't check me, but she checked me out, and she was the one that said, Naomi, you should come by. So Naomi came at eight and checked me, and some people don't want to know their progress, which I really understand and respect, but I am someone, and is probably the director in me, but I like to know what's going on and what we need to achieve. It's kind of like a schedule thing for me, tell me where we need to go so I can put my mind to it.

RYLEE EBSEN: So I asked to know what I was, and I was three centimeters, and I really deflated. I was really sad.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, you though you were a lot further?

RYLEE EBSEN: I thought I was so much further. I felt like I was further. I was in so much pain. Being three sounded like a defeat, and I got -

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: What time is this now?

RYLEE EBSEN: This is 7:00 AM.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Wow. Okay. So you've been laboring for a while on your own at that point, and very intense. Was the intensity in the front, in the back, all over?

RYLEE EBSEN: All over, but yeah, mostly in the back. Mostly in the back, but radiating to the front, it really felt all over. But I will say what saved me is that when Mickey showed up, she brought the TENS machine, and that was very special and important. I'd never used one of those before. A lot of athletes use them. I actually shot a commercial with Kai Lenny, the big surfer, and he showed it to me the summer before, and I was like, "Oh, that thing's cool," not knowing at all that it would be the thing that got me through labor and saved my life.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And now

RYLEE EBSEN: I tell every single person, "But do you have a TENS machine?"

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Well, nothing like a little transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation, TENS, T-E-N-S. It just kind of overloads your nerves with tapping through electric stimulation so that the pain signals are either delayed or blocked from going to your brain. So it's non-pharmaceutical. I think in the hospital, they don't really like it very much because it interferes with their equipment or they're concerned it'll interfere with their equipment or nobody wants to take... In Europe, they use it a lot in the United States, not so much. So I'm glad Mickey brought you some TENS.

RYLEE EBSEN: He brought me some TENS, and it was a saving grace. It really helped just counter... Even if it didn't help necessarily counter the pain, it helped take my mind off of what was going on and helped me focus on the sensation of the vibration of it, and it really helped. And being at home, also on my call sheet was a list of alternative painkillers approaches, and that was also helpful for me to go down that list of the comb in the hand. One thing that came up that I had no idea was twerking. Twerking was not on my pain list, but it helped so much.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: How did twerking just come about if it was not on your list?

RYLEE EBSEN: It was an instinctual animalistic thing that I did that I put one leg high up on the couch and one leg below, and I fully... Cardi B level was shaking my butt as hard as possible, where the whole room was trying not to giggle, I think. Mickey was like, "That's good. That's good. Wow." And then I was doing the splits and twerking. I was trying to shift and sift my body around a lot. I was trying a lot of different standing and squatted positions, but shaking my body and shaking my butt, I think during a contraction was almost like a countermeasure. It was a counter movement to the movement that was happening in my body, so I just kept shaking it. But yeah, it was just funny to hear. Good, good.

RYLEE EBSEN: I was like, "I don't know what I'm doing, but I'm just twerking it out." I was also -

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I just hope you were listening to Cardi B.

RYLEE EBSEN: No, that's what I was about to say. I was twerking to Tibetan Chime... So I go to this place in LA called Surya Spa, which is an Ayurvedic spa, and shout out Marta. I love Marta so much. I've worked with her for years, and she has a playlist, the Surya Spa playlist on Spotify. I got a prenatal massage there and I heard the music and I said, "Oh my God, they must have a playlist here." I found it after that massage, and it played for 14 hours. I mean, it was amazing. It was such a good playlist.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I think twerking to that and also your deflated cervical check is a great time for a little commercial break. We'll be right back. Welcome back. We're talking to Director Riley. Oh my gosh, you're a great storyteller. I'm in the visual. I'm there. You brought me in with your detailed storytelling. I wonder if you had craft services.

RYLEE EBSEN: My mom did bring Air One, which in a way you could say was Craft Services. I had no desire to eat. I was throwing up the whole time. I threw up for 12 hours straight, which was rough. Oh,

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Wow.

RYLEE EBSEN: But they did give me an IV of fluids, which was very helpful. As Naomi and the midwives can do, they can run fluids. They also had to give me the antibiotics because I tested positive for that strain.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Group B streptococcus.

RYLEE EBSEN: Right. So I needed that, but little did I know that I wouldn't need it in the end because my water never broke.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, really? Okay. So we left to this break before hearing from our incredible sponsors that you labored from 1:00 AM after going to sleep Friday night. 1:00 AM, Saturday morning, you woke up, labored till around seven o'clock, the midwives check you, and you were already whopping three centimeters. Cardi keeps making her way into your story.

RYLEE EBSEN: Cardi, shout out Cardi. She should be a part of this. Yeah, so I was only three centimeters, so I did panic a little, but I just realized I got to keep this going and I got to keep walking. I thought going outside would help, so Winnie the Poodit, I had just a shirt on and no pants, and I walked outside at 7:00 AM. Nice. And the neighbors were probably like, "Oh God." But that didn't work. Actually, I felt way worse going outside. I felt scared. I felt like I shouldn't be here. I felt like I needed to retreat back into the womb immediately, so I ran back inside. I was basically just running around the whole house. I mean, running is a stretch, probably walking and pacing, but they were just following me and all things were coming out.

RYLEE EBSEN: My partner was like, "Don't look back. Just don't look back. Keep moving forward." They were cleaning up after me. So something happened between 7:00 AM and 11:00 AM where I started to feel just things coming down my legs. I didn't look really, but I just knew something else was sort of happening. I could tell that things were shifting. I could tell that the baby was moving lower, and that really encouraged me, is just sensations. I was really in tune to what was going on with my body, and because it was a home birth, I was so present. I was just completely in my body, and it was one of the most beautiful things to be that present with yourself and have zero intervention. I had no bright lights. I had no drugs in me.

RYLEE EBSEN: It was just me and my baby. I kept saying over and over, "Help me, baby. Let's work together, baby." I was very vocal. I said, "It hurts." I looked back at my video. I have some intermittent video from the birth, and I kept saying, "It hurts, it hurts." It almost became a mantra like, "It hurts, this hurts. It hurts so bad." But I just kind of vocalized it, which helped me move through it. So what

happened between 7:00 AM and 11:00 AM was really important. So Mickey did this thing where she sifted my belly. I went onto all fours and she took the And she sifted my belly during a contraction, which was one of the most painful things I have ever experienced. I was shouting. I sounded like a cow. I was groaning and moaning.

RYLEE EBSEN: It was pretty insane, that pain, but what it did is it really positioned the baby in the right place, which is also kind of a theme of my whole pregnancy. It's why I went to you for all the body work. I wanted the baby to be in the right position. I wanted him to come down well. I wanted my body to be in the right position. They really both have to be in sync, the baby and you, in order for him to come down. And so Mickey doing the sifting thing, she did it twice. And after that, all of a sudden at 11:00 AM, I was nine centimeters.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Wow. Sifting with the Riboso for the win.

RYLEE EBSEN: Sifting with the Riboso for the win. Unbelievably painful. I've never experienced anything like that.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Did you feel like you had progressed a lot more? I mean, did they check you again and you're like, "Oh no, don't be four, don't be four"?

RYLEE EBSEN: No, I had a feeling 11 was going to be good because I felt that the thing shifting. I felt the things coming down my legs. I felt just things going down. I think I even said, "Things are getting weird." I was so vocal. I was saying crazy. I was just shouting. I remember going in one of our bathrooms and laying down because there's cold tile in there. And I remember them just being like, "She's trying to lay down in here. She's trying to lay down." They were just chasing me. They didn't know where I was going to go or what I was going to do. But the best part about it is that I was empowered. I was the one informing them what my body needed, where I was going to go.

RYLEE EBSEN: I was leading this whole situation, which is something that you and I talked about in our first meeting, which is just having an empowered birth and being in control of whatever you need to do to have the best birth possible or to have the right birth that your baby needs. And I just listened to that intuition.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: That's really amazing. What was pushing like?

RYLEE EBSEN: So they wanted me to get in the tub at 11, and of course I noticed my partner's putting on his sunglasses and I'm like, "Where are you going?" And he's like, "I have to go to Home Depot." I was like, "No, you're going to go. What? You're joking." And he was like, "The part for the tub is actually not right." I was like, "But we did the walkthrough, but we did the plan, but we had the call sheet."

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Well, you know how once you start filming.

RYLEE EBSEN: You know life and you make plans and God laughs. So he went to the Home Depot and he had a very rom-com moment where he walked in with all the guys and he was like, "I need a part and I can't wait in line and my wife's in labor and I have to jump ahead." And they all were like, "Okay, cool. Yeah." And he gave him a dad discount.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: It was really sweet. Oh, I'm going to try that next time I go to Home Depot.

RYLEE EBSEN: And so he makes it back. They fill up the tub. I finally get in the tub and I start pushing in the tub. So I was in the tub for about two hours. He came out, yeah, one and pushing was interesting. By the time I got in the tub, it felt very much like a morphine situation where it was so nice. It felt so soothing to get in the tub. It was such a different sensation than walking around and trying to move my body and get the baby out. And now it was actually all about not letting the baby shoot out. So I would say the tub was all about holding back and actually not -

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, really? For over an hour?

RYLEE EBSEN: Kind of holding on to the contraction and not totally pushing really hard because I knew that he would kind of shoot out is the feeling that I had. So I tried to really gently, gently release him out in a way. It was this weird thing. Naomi did this incredible move. Shout out Naomi for this. She did this counter pressure where she put her fist in my booty and that helped me not push there. And leading up to the birth, again, one of the things I did to prep for it is I went to Origin PT, shout out Origin, Jennifer in Brentwood, she was incredible. And she really helped me visualize the pelvic floor and thinking about pushing forward and not backward and pushing outward and not down.

RYLEE EBSEN: So it was really a visualization and also a sensation when Naomi did that and it helped me remember the pelvic floor work that I did leading up to birth. I know people do it after as well, but I felt like actually before was really helpful going into birth because I was able to really try those exercises when I was in birth. And yeah, so pushing, he came out in double water on Earth Day. So he came out in the sack in the water and it burst as soon as he hit the surface.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: That's so cool.

RYLEE EBSEN: It was incredible.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: That's dreamy.

RYLEE EBSEN: And that's why we named him River, Little River.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Little River Baby. Thank you for sharing the beautiful story. I know that postpartum was a little challenging and we have a few minutes, but I want to touch on it because we don't always get into postpartum. What was happening for you and how did you handle it?

RYLEE EBSEN: I think the birth was so magical and we were in such a bubble. We literally just got out of the tub and went right into our bed and I got to have that golden time with him and everybody checked him, but it was really just on me, on my partner. And then because we were at home and we didn't have to leave, I think the first week of checkups and things were really intense because we were like, "The freeway is so dangerous. Does anybody know that the 405 drive a hundred miles an hour?" Once you have a baby, you just realize that the modern world is terrifying. So driving to the tongue tie, when he came out, Naomi noticed when she was checking him that he had a pretty severe tongue tie all the way to the tip actually.

RYLEE EBSEN: He couldn't touch the roof of his mouth or side to side and you could tough it out or you could just snip it right away. And she's sensitive about whether you should get it snipped, but she's usually pretty conservative about it. But I think she just felt like it was the right thing to do if we felt comfortable. So we got an appointment the next day actually. So on day two, we were going to Westwood to get that tongue tie because we just wanted breastfeeding to be... He really didn't feed right away. He wasn't latching due to the tongue tie, so we decided to go for it. And we had a wonderful doctor who held our hand and was very lovely, but still we were just so fragile. I mean, I was hysterically crying.

RYLEE EBSEN: Anytime you have a procedure for a newborn, I think you just have to be really gentle with yourself and you need to give yourself a lot of grace because what you went through is so, so profound and you're changed so much. Your hormones are up and down, your body is still healing. So as much as you can just be really gentle with yourself, and I really tried to take the 40 days to heart where even though we had these doctor's appointments and things and obviously the pediatrician and stuff like that, I tried to just be home and be nurtured. I had this rule that if anybody came over, you were either doing laundry, holding the baby or feeding us.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: It is a great rule. My kids are teenagers, but I'm going to enforce that anyway.

RYLEE EBSEN: You have to do it. Enforce it.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah. Do my laundry or feed me.

RYLEE EBSEN: One of the three. You have to.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah, it's smart. I mean, we say it all the time here on the podcast that it takes a village to raise a child and we don't have the village anymore. So if people are going to come over and I'll go with the kid, then they need to be the village.

RYLEE EBSEN: Absolutely. You got to pass that baby around. It's good for them too. It's good for their immune system and it's really beautiful. We've passed him around for seven months now and knock on wood, he'd never been sick.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh wow, that's amazing.

RYLEE EBSEN: I had a cold.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Must be the in utero chiropractic care. Okay, so what a beautiful story and so beautifully told. I appreciate you for everything. I appreciate the universe for introducing us so I get to hang out and be around your magic from time to time.

RYLEE EBSEN: Thanks for letting me share. I just want people to know, a lot of ladies to know that it's up to them. They can pick their birth team. I interviewed a lot of people and if you want to have the most empowered birth, it's just on you to find your right team, find your right people and not be afraid to ask questions, not be afraid to say, "You know what? I don't like this person. I'm going to keep looking." And I think it's so important for us to share information, which is why I wanted to do this with you. I wanted to share information. I don't think we do it enough. I think the community aspect is

missing in this culture and we need to talk about it, tell stories, help each other out, give advice.

RYLEE EBSEN: If you don't know what to do, it means you don't have enough information.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: That's very sound advice and it's true. I mean, the number of times you hear stories where people just say, "I didn't know. I didn't know. I would've chosen this. I just didn't know it was a choice. I didn't even know I had a choice to make." So yeah, that's the whole reason we do everything on Informed Pregnancy, the podcast, the blog, the streaming, just to give you information. Information is power and I'm glad you had it.

RYLEE EBSEN: I'm so glad that you have this. I listened to so many episodes leading up to my birth. It was so helpful. And Naomi's episode is fantastic. I listened to that before I even met her. I mean, you're just doing the best work. You're sharing all the stories and storytelling is so important.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Well, I'm going to pull you into comedy as I promised already. I think at the very least you could just talk about your Cardi B birth.

RYLEE EBSEN: The twerking. I mean, it writes itself, honestly. Motherhood is full of jokes, and I think comedy is the only way that we can get through the tough times.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah, that's what it is. Challenge plus time equals comedy, and there's a lot of challenges and hurdles to overcome.

RYLEE EBSEN: Absolutely.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And then I look forward to the day. I get to be directed by you in some small part somewhere.

RYLEE EBSEN: I can't wait. I mean, there's so many doodle parts in my future, so your phone will be ringing.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I'm in. All right. Thanks again for sharing. Where can we find you online?

RYLEE EBSEN: I'm on Instagram @directorrylee, spelled R-Y-L-E-E.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: It's a great spelling.

RYLEE EBSEN: Thank you.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Do people usually get it wrong?

RYLEE EBSEN: All the time, yeah. Good old Donna and Dusty, my parents wanted a unique name and I appreciate it.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Where did they get it?

RYLEE EBSEN: It's a family name. It was a nickname of someone on my dad's side whose name was Ryland, but they wanted to name him or they wanted to name me Ryland if I was a boy, and then I guess his nickname was Riley. So yeah, I was going to be Riley or Ryland. And now we got Little River, River and Riley.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: River and Riley, all the Rs. All right, we're going to check you out on Instagram. Thanks you again for being here and thanks at home for listening to the Informed Pregnancy Podcast. For more pregnancy and parenting information, visit us online at informedpregnancy. com so that you can stay informed and be empowered.

Enjoying the Informed Pregnancy Podcast?

Visit us at **informedpregnancy.com** for episodes, articles, and resources for pregnancy, birth, and beyond.

Want more? Subscribe to **Informed Pregnancy+** at **informedpregnancy.tv** for films, series, and exclusive content.