Radical Love with Alexis Jones

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IN THIS EPISODE

Alexis Jones — founder of I Am That Girl and author of the memoir Joy Hunter — talks with Dr. Elliot Berlin, DC about her punishing road through infertility and loss, the family secret that reframed what parenthood means to her, and the radical love she found in letting go of the "how."

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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 had a very challenging road to parenthood, a journey though that helped her learn to let go of control and embrace radical gratitude. She has authored Joy Hunter, a raw memoir about her journey through love, loss, and discovery. Alexis Jones, welcome to the podcast.

ALEXIS JONES: Thank you so much for having me. What a part. You nailed it.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Thank you.

ALEXIS JONES: What a great intro.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Nailed it. Okay. I just met you, if we're going to be honest, a few minutes ago, and you have incredible energy and the positivity is exploding through the electronic devices. And I know you had a very, very, very challenging road, and I did too with my wife, not the same as yours, but very difficult fertility journey. And I don't know, I think it knocked us down at least for a while. And we're the most miserable people to be around. And we've come from there, but not like you. So I want to find out when Harry met Sally, I'll have what she's having. I got to find out how you got to be you. Let's start at the beginning. Where are you from originally?

ALEXIS JONES: I grew up in Austin, Texas.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: What was that like? And why don't you have an accent?

ALEXIS JONES: Austin's a pretty big town, I think. My mom's originally from Oregon, so yeah, I lost the accent. I don't know if I ever had one, actually. People would always say that to me when I was in high school. They'd be like, "Wait, you're from Texas, but you don't sound like you would draw." And I would say, "If I have a couple whiskeys, it's different." Then it starts coming out and it's a lot slower and it's like y'all. So it's in there. Eight,

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Nine, 10, y'all.

ALEXIS JONES: Eight, nine, 10, y'all.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh my God, it's good. But you do have the big Texas energy.

ALEXIS JONES: I do. And I have the big Texas hair. Obviously you can see me, but I've tamed it with the braid. But yes, I definitely perpetuate the stereotype that women in Texas have enormous hair that it makes us closer to God.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, okay.

ALEXIS JONES: Yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Good to know. So Austin, no real drawl unless you're drunk or pissed.

ALEXIS JONES: Exactly.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And then where do you go from there?

ALEXIS JONES: I grew up in Westlake, which was a very wealthy community, which is part of the context I think of this story. And I grew up on the other side of the tracks. So I grew up in a little place called Quanavaca, which was inside of Westlake, but I was proximate to success and to wealth and to privilege. So I think it built part of that drive inside of me that was insatiable. Did my undergrad and master's at USC. I studied undergrad was international relations and Spanish and communication management for my master's. I always though I'd get into politics. My grandpa was this incredible judge in Texas and it was kind of between him and LBJ for who got the tap to run for president. So we had really deep political roots in Texas.

ALEXIS JONES: And so part of me feels like I was always being reared to be this Texas politician. So I went out to school thinking I would learn the world of politics and I would come back home like a good girl and I would check all the boxes and do all the things. And right out of grad school I started a company called I Am That Girl, which is basically a badass version of Girl Scouts for college girls. And I did that for a long time, for about a decade. I was on the road preaching and talking and inspiring young women for living.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: How did that come to be?

ALEXIS JONES: Great question. I sat down with a group of girls my sophomore year and we have a lot of conversations about things that don't matter, clothes and boys and movies and all sorts of fun things. But what if once a week we had conversations about things that did matter? Would that interest you and would you come? In the first meeting, six girls showed up and six meetings later we had 347 girls showing up. And that was when it was born. It was just this idea of like, wow, there's this

real depth, especially to young women on college campuses that we want to talk about the hard things and there really wasn't a space where we Were Allowed to do that.

ALEXIS JONES: And I assumed maybe that we weren't the only college campus in the country that was interested in doing that. And then at the height of I Am Tha Girl, we had 1. 2 million girls and I think we were in 27 countries and it was girls, young women coming together every week talking about important topics like anxiety and depression and boundaries and sexual assault prevention and you name it. And it was kind of like real life 101 classes and the stuff that we weren't getting classes in growing up. So it was incredibly inspiring to be in a sea full of young women All

ALEXIS JONES: Hungry and passionate about wanting to make a difference in the world and not really knowing where to start and probably most honestly just really wanting to make a difference in our own world and that being a good place at least to have the conversations.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Wow. So you hit the ground running.

ALEXIS JONES: Yes. That's why I said there's context.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: There is context. Hit the ground running, making a difference. And a lot of people I think have a great idea like that and have six people at the first meeting and six people at the 10th meeting. So it doesn't happen by itself. It's overcoming that resistance, building momentum doesn't happen by itself. So congratulations on that. And that was just the beginning, although I would've rather vote for you for president.

ALEXIS JONES: Well, I never say never, but not at the moment.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I'm telling you right now, you have my vote.

ALEXIS JONES: Amazing.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Okay, fine. So you did that and what do you do now?

ALEXIS JONES: Yeah, now I actually am in conversations with a company called Girlology about teaming up and they are two really badass female doctors who are doing incredible work in the space of health and wellness and kind of merging these two communities together to better serve girls. So certainly continuing to hopefully inspire, empower, and provide tools and resources for women. But I'm also taking care of a precious little baby boy that I was not sure would ever be in my future. So I have the privilege of also getting to be a mom. You're going to make me emotional. We haven't even started. So yeah, those are my two biggest roles right now.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Which is more challenging, taking care of 1. 2 million women or one little boy?

ALEXIS JONES: Hands down one little boy.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah.

ALEXIS JONES: I'm not the boss when it comes to him. That's the difference. He's the boss. So in work, I can be the boss and I can talk to other adults in communicating effectively with him. I'm like,

"Whatever you want, I love you."

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Well, let's get to the beginning of that journey. Was being a mom something you always considered, wanted?

ALEXIS JONES: No. And I think that for some reason, I always had a lot of shame about answering that question honestly, but I think that I was so career driven. I had such a vision for the life in the world and how I wanted to impact it that I was always kind of on the fence. And I actually, it made me feel like something was broken in me because I think I envied people who were certain that they wanted to be parents like my husband who is a six nine poster boy feminism. And he's the kind of guy that, and I've known him since we were nine years old, we grew up together, and he's the guy who's like his whole life he's known he's wanted to be a dad.

ALEXIS JONES: And I envied just as much my friends who knew without a shadow of a doubt that they absolutely didn't want to be parents. And I was just in kind of this abyss in the middle where I was like, "I don't know. And how do you know? And when is that answer going to solidify?" So I think it really wasn't until we had our first miscarriage that I think it was in that moment maybe that I had imagined a world in which I was going to be a mom and then all of a sudden that was taken away. And I think that was when it really dawned on me that this was a shared dream, that I wasn't... I joke with my husband that at a certain point was like, "You know I'm doing this for you." It's so ridiculous.

ALEXIS JONES: The amount of things I put my body through and I'm like, "Good God, there's no way you can 'do that for someone else." But yeah, I think it took me a minute to realize and probably took me losing a baby to realize how much I actually wanted one.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Was the fact that you were pregnant, meaning you were still on the fence, but going for it?

ALEXIS JONES: Yeah. Yeah. I was like, "Oh, I'm pregnant, so I guess this train ends with the baby." So at the time I was like, "Yeah, okay, rock and roll. We're doing this." But I also -

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: So was that not a planned pregnancy?

ALEXIS JONES: Oh yeah, that was planned. We had tried for years and then we ended up doing IVF, so that was mega planned.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Let me back up a little bit. Nine years old, you meet this guy who eventually turned six nine?

ALEXIS JONES: Yep. Yeah, six nine.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I usually say Moses, but Jesus, that is tall. But you didn't get married at nine. How did that relationship turn into this relationship?

ALEXIS JONES: So I was a grade older and as anyone knows, an older gal, he gives me a hard time that I was fixated on older boys, which I was. So when I did my undergrad and master's at USC, I didn't see him for almost 10 years, and he played basketball at University of Texas, hence the hype. And I remember when they were in the final four, I remember seeing him in a bar when I was in LA, I

was in a sports bar because I grew up with four older brothers, so I'm a huge sports junkie. And I remember being like, "Man, good for him." Because it zoomed in and it was like, "Brad Buckman with 22 points." And I just remember whatever guy I was sitting next to on the stool, I was like, "Man, good for him."

ALEXIS JONES: And the guy looked at me and he was like, "Oh, do you know him?" And I said, "Yeah, I grew up with him and he might be the kindest person that I've ever met." And that was the only sentiment that I had about him. And I hadn't seen him in years. I wouldn't see him for another four years, I think. So 10 years after I graduated high school, I came home, my dad was battling cancer, and I walked into a local bar in Austin and ran into him. And within, I don't know, I mean, it's kind of a cheesy, obnoxiously gross love story because he ends up walking up and chatting and asking me out. And then on our first date, he doesn't even make it 10 minutes in. And he was like, "Okay, I have a confession."

ALEXIS JONES: And I was like, "Oh God, where are we going with this?" At this point, he was a professional athlete, professional basketball player, and he was like, "I'm not going to lie. I've been in love with you since we were 10 years old, so even if I don't get a second date." He was like, "I'm living out every little boy's dream of being on a date with a person that they were in love with in high school." So yeah, it was really the kind of stuff you can't make up. So he continues. I tell everyone, I'm like, "Marry the person who's been in love with you forever because you can do no wrong." Because to this day he's like, "I got to pinch myself. I can't believe I'm married to Alexis Jones." So yeah, he's -

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: That's so sweet. Alexis, how tall are you?

ALEXIS JONES: I'm almost 5'10".

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, so you're also tall.

ALEXIS JONES: Yeah. Yeah, we're tall. We're tall people. We're big Texans. We're big.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Texans. Everything's big in Texas.

ALEXIS JONES: Everything's big in Texas.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: All right, so if I can recap, you were born politics, Texas, over there at Westlake, then international affairs at USC, and then 1. 2 million young women rallying them, empowering them, and then meeting up with your childhood buddy and finding out he's had a crush on you ever since, and then marrying him, and then we're going to take a break and come back and find out what happened next. Wow, welcome back. We're talking to Joy Hunter, Alexis Jones. You sound like Crocodile Hunter for happy things.

ALEXIS JONES: Yeah, I've never heard that before, but I want to make that my new tagline.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Thank you very much. I'm glad I can help. So here we are. Everything's going blissfully fine. You're not quite sure you want to be a parent, but the very tall husband does.

ALEXIS JONES: Yes.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: He's like, "I want in." So then did you collectively decide, "Hey, let's go for it?"

ALEXIS JONES: Yeah, I said, "Okay. Yeah, let's try." And so we did that for a couple years. Then anyone who's ever been on the trail of infertility of slowly discovering that something is not working, and I'm that type A who is used to getting shit done. So I said, "Let's do this." And then immediately Amazoned ovulation strips that I could pee on because I was like, "If we're going to do this, we're going to..." And I just assumed we'd get pregnant immediately, and that didn't happen for about a year and then two years. And then we finally met with a fertility clinic in Austin and found out that I had significantly low egg count and low egg quality.

ALEXIS JONES: And it was actually one of those moments where my husband, they call him because they tested all his sperm, and they called and they were like, "My God, sir, I mean, we've never seen this before, but you have four times the amount of healthy..." And I just remember him fist bumping and being like, "Yes," and then looking at me and being like, "Oh, no. Oh my God. I'm so sorry, David." I was like, "It's fine. It's my fault."

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I mean, that must feel pretty crappy.

ALEXIS JONES: Yeah, especially when you are accustomed and you have an identity as someone who gets things done and someone who is capable. So I just went to work. I mean, I just went to every single book I could find, every single podcast, every single TED Talk. I just started doing every single thing, took out alcohol, stopped drinking caffeine, stopped doing sugar. I was just like every single thing in my control that I can do, everything that makes life wonderful, that I'm going to take out of my life.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: That must be when you lost your accent.

ALEXIS JONES: Exactly. And then I lost my accent. So yeah, I did that for about two years. And then when I got the diagnosis of low egg count, low egg quality, which was shocking to me because at the time I was only 34, 35. So if anything, my fertility doctor thought I was being impatient and kind of jumping the gun. He was like, "The majority of my clients are 39. You're actually considered a young buck here." And so we did our first round of IVF, and I think I just assumed like, "Okay, we just need a little support."

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Where were you living then?

ALEXIS JONES: I was living in Austin. My husband had retired from basketball and we'd moved back to our hometown in Austin. So when we did the egg retrieval, we only got two eggs, and that was shocking and disappointing. And then only one made it to a Blastis, and then we did a fresh transfer with the only one that we had, and we got that phone call, "Congratulations, you're pregnant." And after years of trying, I was like, "We did it. Okay." And I think for me, the expectations, I think I just assumed truly that, well, of course this is going to work because I live in America and when we buy things, when we spend money, we get things in return. And so I was like, "We just spent so much money in IBM. Of course this is going to work."

ALEXIS JONES: Just that mentality of transaction, I think. I applied to this situation, which as anyone knows, it's not applicable.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: No, especially in this situation. You could spend endlessly come home empty.

ALEXIS JONES: Yep. And that is a very unique thing about this situation, is that exact point, that there is never a guarantee. And if there's anything that I'm really conscious of, because throughout our entire process, people would be like, "I just know that one day you're going to be a parent." And I'd be like, "But you can't possibly... No one knows and no one's guaranteed anything in this wild journey." So we ended up losing the baby within the first trimester, but losing the baby long enough in that everyone around us had brought us gifts and our career was filled with congratulations, God is good. We knew it was going to happen for y'all, and everyone is just so blissful.

ALEXIS JONES: Because as someone loving someone on the journey of fertility, you're just rooting so hard. And our mutual friend, Danielle, I remember her calling and just bawling and being like, "Babe, I knew it would... I love you so much." And at the time she was pregnant with her second. So I was like, "We're having babies together. This is amazing." Yeah. So it was, of course, soul crushing that didn't work out.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Dagger in the soul, and then all these other things just turn the dagger and make it worse, having the presence, having people know, having a friend who's pregnant at the same time, and also having nothing left. You had nobody in the freezer.

ALEXIS JONES: Nothing. Nothing.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Everything lost.

ALEXIS JONES: And that's what it feels like is that Candyland, that go back to start, go back to start. Every time you're just like... But sale cycle, right? The cycle of us getting to this point is so hard and so long and so expensive. So you're just throwing all of your heart and all of your money, which I feel like people never talk about this, but it's somehow taboo to be like, "It's so expensive and that's creating an entire other stress for a family." So much stress. Is it you're like, "Oh my God, do we gamble again? Do we try this again?"

ALEXIS JONES: So yeah, for us, like you said, it was not only heartbreaking that we had been trying for years that we finally got pregnant, but it rattled as someone who grew up in the church my whole life, and my dad led my youth group and was someone who really felt a deep, deep connection to the God of my understanding. And I will say that of every experience in my life was the most rattling to the foundation, the fabric by which my life has been strewn, the tapestry, the actual threads making up the tapestry of my life, it rattled me to my core of what kind of God gives something to someone that is their heart's desire, everything they've been working for for years only to take it away. I remember thinking in the moment how cruel it felt.

ALEXIS JONES: And like you said, the rest of the world doesn't stop spinning. So here I am getting to watch my best friend continue on with her pregnancy, and another one of my closest friends were actually the godparents of her daughter. She comes to me and it's like, "By the way, sorry, but I'm

pregnant." She'd been trying a month and a half. I just remember getting up from the table and being like, "One second," because we were at a restaurant and walking in the bathroom and just bawling my eyes out and then coming back to the table and being like, "You know what? Here's the deal. There are two things that can be true at the same time. I am overjoyed for you.

ALEXIS JONES: I am so excited that this is your reality, that this dream is happening for you, and I am so sad and devastated for us." And both of those things are true. So like you said, it was like -

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Everyone's true, but their joy shines a surgical great spotlight on your sadness. And I really love how you said that because I know we felt that when we were pregnant and we had miscarriages and our friends who were pregnant at the same time, just going through the milestones, oh, 20 weeks, or she's wild, look at she's showing, or they're looking at strollers or, oh, she's almost due. She had the baby and they're having the bris or whatever it is.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Each one is just more of a spotlight on our sadness and you do feel joy for them, and then you feel guilt because the joy that you feel for them is shrouded and twisted in with your own sadness, and you can't be fully happy for them in the way that you want to, and then you feel like a terrible person. I don't know if you did, but that's how I felt.

ALEXIS JONES: Yeah, no, of course. I remember there was one time, and I always want to always give people permission that nine out of 10 times I could muster up the courage and show up to the baby showers when everybody is looking at me being like, "Oh my God, is she okay?" Everyone is doing the thing where they're staring at you being like, "Hey girl, so what else is going on?" The total pink elephant in the room, nine out of 10 times, I could show up and put on a brave face. I always tell people, "Give yourself permission for the times where you just don't have it in you." I remember a really dear friend, I remember calling her and being like, "I love you. I'm so excited for you. I cannot come to your baby shower today. I just don't have it."

ALEXIS JONES: And like you said, there are moments where I remember my little sister, my stepsister, who is one of my favorite humans in the entire world, and I remember she was on baby three, and I was like, "You have three toys and I have no toys. I have your third, you already had two." And just being like, "What?" The actual... Oh, God. Yeah, and that was one of those times where my dad called and was like, "Hey, just a heads-up, Jessie's pregnant again." I do remember throwing my phone and then eventually picking my phone up being like, "Okay, dad, thanks for the heads-up. I'll make sure to call her and say congratulations." But yeah, it's so hard. It's so hard.

ALEXIS JONES: It's our human nature to see all the other kids in the classroom getting ice cream cones and you not getting one and you not understanding why. I mean, anyone would say, "No, of course that's cruel. No one would do that to a child. It's no different." The kid inside of us is saying, "Not only is this not fair, but in my situation, I think I was also dealing with all the feelings of what's wrong with me? I'm the problem. It's my fault." And of course, having a very real moment in therapy with my husband where I end up breaking down and saying, "You didn't sign up for this. You signed up to have kids. I've known that from day one. This isn't fair for you, and if for any reason you don't want to be with me and you want to find a partner..."

ALEXIS JONES: I mean, I think that was maybe even my deeper, deepest fear was, "Oh my goodness, what if my best friend in the entire world that is also my husband chooses to leave?" And of course, in the moment he said all the things you would ever want anyone to say, which is like, "What? In what world? You are my person and I love you." I swear movies are scripted after this man. But yeah, said all the things that you would ever want to hear in that moment, which is, "I chose you and you're enough, and if we never have children, you're enough." I mean,

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Just even get a sliver of the emotion that made you say that, that to come up and say, "I am an utter failure. I can't provide you what you deserve, what you want, what you need." What that must feel like, the rot that must feel like on the inside, I can't begin to relate. And what it must have felt like for him to come back and reassure you that no, you're it. I have a friend who sadly did a lot of fertility treatment and then had triplets. But after she had the triplets, she had an injury from the birth that left her in a vegetative state, and her kids are now 17 years old. But I remember after it happened and we didn't know if she was going to recover or not recover, she was a very close friend of mine too.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: She was a patient and a very close friend. We went to chiropractic school together and her husband, I spent many hours with him where he was just crying saying, "You can have all three kids back. I just want Abby back." And for you to be able to see that and hear that from your husband, "You're what matters to me as much as I want kids, you're what matters." So I'm getting a little emotional. So let's move on. So I don't like being in touch with my feelings.

ALEXIS JONES: Clearly as you do an amazing podcast around fertility. No, no, no, you're not a feelings guy.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I get it. No, it's for you to talk. Your

ALEXIS JONES: Feelings. Yeah, yeah,

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Of

ALEXIS JONES: Course.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Don't turn the tables on me. All right, that didn't work out. And then you had nobody in the freezer, you spent a lot of money. Oh, I mean, so then where do you go from there?

ALEXIS JONES: Yeah, I think the other thing that came up in therapy was my mom was a single mom with five kids, and she worked two jobs and went to night school while raising all of us, and no one from her family ever graduated high school, much less college. She put all five of her kids through undergrad, grad school, and/or law school. So the reason that I share this is that I was raised by a thoroughbred as far as being capable and getting things done and never making excuses for anything. Just by osmosis, I just saw this indelible, resilient work ethic. The reason I bring that up is the other really pivotal moment in therapy with my husband was that our therapist looked at Brad and said, "You need to tell her that she's done enough."

ALEXIS JONES: I remember in the moment being like, "Wait, what?" She said, "You need to look her in the eyes right now. You need to tell her that she's done enough and that she can stop." I just remember getting really emotional when he looked at me and he was like, "Oh my God, of course." We just had the moment of like, "Oh my God, I love you and you're enough and I don't care. I don't need... You're who I choose in this lifetime." And then he looked at me and he was like, "Well, yeah, babe, of course you've done enough and you can stop now."

ALEXIS JONES: I mean, when I say I lost it, I didn't even know that I needed to hear that because with that work ethic and that drive that had, like you said, hit the ground running, my whole life was this insatiable hunger, nothing was ever good enough. And in that moment being told, "You've been doing this for years, the things that you have put your body through on behalf of making our dream come true, I didn't even know that I needed permission to stop." And that was looking back, one of the greatest gifts he ever offered me was just an out, like, "White flag, you're good. You've done enough." Because I remember thinking, "I'll do a hundred more rounds. I'll do whatever it takes."

ALEXIS JONES: And that was some of the most generous grace he offered me in that moment, was the idea that if we wanted to stop there, that he was completely okay with that.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: That's so powerful. I don't know if I ever would've thought of that. Okay. Well, you do have a kid.

ALEXIS JONES: I do have a kid. Spoiler

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Alert.

ALEXIS JONES: I know. I'm like, spoiler alert. And by the way, the whole time I'm hearing in the background, I'm like, "Is he crying? What's happening back there? My husband's with him.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Well, it seems like after you did your IVF, after you got pregnant with the one embryo you had, and then had a miscarriage and felt all the lows that you realized, I want to be a mom, and is very curious about the journey From that Moment to where You Are right now. Let's take A Quick break, and when We Come back, we'll get the rest of that story. Welcome back. We are talking to Alexis Jones, Joy Hunter. Got to check out this book. I mean, your energy, I bet, comes through the pages of that book. I hope so. An extremely fast read. Okay, so we got to where we were. You finally got pregnant, joy of all joys, miscarriage, depths of all sadness. What happened next in your fertility journey?

ALEXIS JONES: Yeah, so everything went terribly wrong all at the same time. COVID happened, so we had just gotten pregnant, just lost the baby, early, early COVID. I had 150 events on the calendar for 2020. All 150 events got canceled in two weeks. So my entire income went to zero. I went on unemployment, and I had been doing a speaking tour with Glennon Doyle and Abby Wambach, and ancestry. com was our biggest corporate sponsor, so we were all doing the TV show to do press for the speaking tour and not so little life curve ball. I found out that my dad, who raised me, who is my real life superhero, who... Has coached everything I ever played, that he was in fact not my biological father. That was a little family secret revealed.

ALEXIS JONES: And at the time, my mom asked me not to tell my dad, and I tried to keep that secret, but my dad and I were so close, and they got divorced when I was a baby, but they were exceptional co-parents. So every single soccer game, every volleyball game, you name it, they were front, center, sitting next to each other, really good friends. And so at the time my mom was like, "He's never going to forgive me. Please don't tell him and please don't tell your four older brothers."

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I mean, what was it like for you the minute you figured that out?

ALEXIS JONES: Oh gosh, it was two bombs. It was not only is your dad not your biological father, but the man who is, is a hundred percent Mexican. So it was also an introduction of an entire new race into my life thinking that I was Caucasian. Although what's interesting, which I talk about in my book, is that from the time that I was seven or eight years old, second or third grade, I've kept a journal my whole life. The one consistent phrase throughout all of my journals was, "I know that I'm being lied to, I just don't know what it's about."

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, wow.

ALEXIS JONES: So for my whole life, had kind of known that there was something and there were some family jokes that Willie Nelson, this country singer, that he was my dad. There were just these weird jokes in the family. So found out that my dad was not my biological father, that I was actually Hispanic, that I was 50% Mexican, and tried to keep the secret from my dad until I was just bursting at the seams. And of course my mother has since said, and my mother's my best friend in the whole world, which made all of this even more complicated because here I am completely, my world's turned upside down, but she's my best friend. And so I'm also trying to protect her. And finally I just come clean and I say, "Mom, I have to tell dad.

ALEXIS JONES: It just feels like there's this huge secret between us now." And so I go to tell my dad and then the real family secret is revealed when he says, "I've actually always known." And I said, "What?" So now I'm like, "What are you talking about?" And he said, "Your mom and I, it was tail end of a dying marriage. We were living in the same house, but we were separated." He said, "When you were born, I was at the hospital and I asked your mom, is she mine?" And your mom didn't really answer and looked away, but the nurse handed you to me. He said, "And in that moment, Alexis, I chose you." And that was so huge that he didn't just show... He wasn't a casual dad.

ALEXIS JONES: Anyone who knows Mark Jones, anyone who knows me knows that my dad is poster boy of the possibilities of fatherhood. And to realize that that was a voluntary choice, that his love for me was a choice, was not out of obligation, was not out of duty, was because he made a decision. And in that moment, and at this point, we're years into our journey, we've had our miscarriage, I'm contemplating how are we going to move forward? We just talked about the fact that we're back to start. And he said, "Just so you know, parenthood has nothing to do with biology. It has nothing to do with the fact that you and I don't share the same genes.

ALEXIS JONES: Parenthood is making a relentless commitment to show up and love a tiny human every single day and especially the days that you don't feel like it." And just gave this radical speech of what love is. And I remember having a moment where I was like, "I want that." I always said growing up, because part of my work ethic was because I grew up in this really wealthy neighborhood

and I wasn't wealthy, so I had a chip on my shoulder. And so I was like, "You just wait. I'm going to go make something of myself and I'm going to..." It's so funny because you're like, "What am I going to do? Come back to my high school halls and walk around?"

ALEXIS JONES: But this ass kicker in me my whole life, and yet in that moment, what I realized was the thing that I wanted most in the whole world was to share this love because I told everyone growing up my whole life, we may not have had a lot of money, but I'm a billionaire in love. And I would always say that. And I know my parents are divorced, but they're amazing. I have these four older brothers and my stepsister. I just have this amazing plethora, superfluous overflow of love in my life. I remember that was the really defining moment where in that moment I made the decision, I actually don't care how I become a mom. It doesn't matter. The biology doesn't matter.

ALEXIS JONES: At that point, we've been trying so hard to make my eggs and brad sperm and this baby that was the makeup of both of us. In that moment I was like, oh, it doesn't matter. We would eventually get an egg donor, which is how my son was conceived. I was fortunate enough to be able to carry him, which was wild and awesome and so hard and everything in between. But in that moment, I knew that it didn't matter whether we adopted, whether we fostered, whether we got an egg donor, whether we miraculously got pregnant naturally because I had been the recipient of that volume of love and I knew instantaneously that I was capable of doing the same. So that was when I let go of the how.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: That must also be a big... I mean, that just opens up so many more doors for you.

ALEXIS JONES: Every door. Every door was open. Did matter. And by the way, is there a young person out there in the world in our lives that needs love and support? We'll take them. I just remember being like, I'll take a kid. Any kid anywhere. Does a kid need a home? We'll take him. Because I don't know, like you said, it just opened. It flooded me with both the certainty in that moment that I was going to be a mother and the how no longer mattered. I don't think I'd realized how attached I was to the how. I knew with certainty that that was happening some way or another. I also knew that the privilege it would be to love whatever child found their way into our home.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I want to be a love billionaire.

ALEXIS JONES: Yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: What's that song? I want to be a love billionaire.

ALEXIS JONES: I don't think it's love billionaire, but I think we should change the lyrics and make it love billionaire.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: That's what I'm saying. I'm making it. I'm making it. So loving bad.

ALEXIS JONES: Yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Anyway, so bet you. There's a million questions. There has to be a second episode. To be a fly on the wall, I'm trying to picture it, and just to be a fly on the wall when you found out that your dad is not your biological dad, when you talked to your mother about it and

approached her and went for that, the emotions are so big. My heart is beating a million times a minute just thinking about what that would be like. And then going to your dad to tell him what that would be like and then finding out that he already knew to be a fly on the wall. I can't imagine those experiences. So in the end you had a donor and that process of picking a donor egg could be a whole episode.

ALEXIS JONES: A whole episode, which by the way, it was during COVID. So people, my girlfriends, because I have a sick, sarcastic sense of humor, it's how I've gotten through everything and a very dark sense of humor. And so my girlfriends would be like, "It's just so hard trying to date during COVID." I was like, "You know what's worse? Trying to find a baby mama to reproduce with your husband." And they'd be like, "Gosh." I'd be like, "No, I'm kidding. Anyway."

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Sort of.

ALEXIS JONES: Yeah, exactly. You swiping right, you swiping left, tell me all the things. But it felt like a very similar process. And I will say that infertility was one level of isolation. It felt hard to relate to a lot of people in my life who had never experienced that. And then when we did the IVF route, that was another level of isolation, certainly a miscarriage, and I think that those are more common across the board. But when we then had to dive into the deep end of quote unquote egg donor, I did not know a single person in my life who had ever gone down that journey. And that felt unbelievably isolating for us. There was literally no one to relate to for me as I'm hiring agencies to help me.

ALEXIS JONES: I'm in a portal looking at all of these women and watching their videos and reading, and I was just like, "Oh my God, I'm online dating for a baby mama." I remember at one point I looked at Brad and I was like, "What about this one?" He was like, "Nope, this is a trap. Nope.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Nope. A trap."

ALEXIS JONES: Yeah. He was like, "You're choosing." So that was an entire experience that was already confronting.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: That should and could be an entire episode by itself. But once you got past that, you picked, and do you get multiple eggs?

ALEXIS JONES: Yeah, so you get one full cycle. And again, this is another... So now we have, I think, three eggs financially of what we've paid for IVF for an egg donor. And we were hoping, and like you said, this is an entire episode of so many things that I learned on that journey. But yes, we got an entire cycle. We ended up getting 19 eggs, so we were super excited.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Costco.

ALEXIS JONES: And exactly, that's what I felt like. And then it turned out only 11 of them were mature eggs. And then when we combined them with Brad sperm, only five made it to a blastis, and then we sent them off for genetic testing and we only got two embryos back. And so that again was just like, how are we back to the number two? And then there was actually a bit of a curve ball where I was told there was a moment where I thought I wouldn't be able to carry. So then we courted a surrogate, which a whole other thing for nine months we courted a surrogate. And then we actually

found a second opinion who thought I was a good candidate. Because at that point, we're four years in at that point, all of our life savings.

ALEXIS JONES: And at that point we only had two embryos. So I was like, whatever's the best vehicle. And if I'm not the best vehicle, then this isn't about ego. This is just about we want a baby. So thank God that surrogate fell through and we got a second opinion and that doctor said, nope, I actually think you're an excellent candidate for X, Y, and Z. And so we did the transfer and it felt so strange. And you had mentioned a young woman before who's pregnant after loss and was like, can I listen to an episode that's happy? Because I don't even think we told friends and family until I was six months pregnant. I was straight up hiding it because I was like, oh hell no, am I dealing with anyone's disappointment?

ALEXIS JONES: Not only can I not hold the weight of their hope for me, but heaven forbid this goes south. I don't survive another loss and especially the weight of other people's expectations. So we were very quiet about it. And this is where I was like, oh, God is clearly a woman because zero through eight months, my pregnancy was blissful. There was no nausea. I was still working out six days a week. I had good energy, all the things. And then two months before my son was due, my husband headed out for his last hurrah to Cabo to go play golf with his best buds. And I texted him from the plane and said, you should probably call me when you land. My water broke two months early.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Whoa.

ALEXIS JONES: And then I was like, wait, what? I felt so entitled to an easy pregnancy and an easy delivery and my water broke. I moved into the hospital for a couple weeks. I was on bed rest, of course. And then eventually it ends in an emergency C-section and my son goes to the NICU for two to three weeks and then he comes home on oxygen for two to three weeks. And you would not believe this when you look at this chunky monkey who's now eight months old and our egg donor's almost six feet tall, my husband is 6'9" and my son Ninja kicked out of his little water bubble because he was so excited to come into the world. So now I look at this eight month old. I mean, he's like this beautiful, healthy, enormous already, not only is he caught up, he's like...

ALEXIS JONES: We knew he was going to be a monster. We knew he was going to be a beast, but the journey, my God, the journey, just to get to the starting line.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: The number of times that I took an unexpected gasp in your story is unprecedented. I mean, wow. Everything you went through, everything you went through, I mean, it's sort of breathtaking. It's hard to process all the different things you've been through. And again, just such a beautiful love of life and Passion For life on your face and your expressions and your voice and in the work that you do. So we could do five more episodes, but wrap this one up.

ALEXIS JONES: Yeah, of course.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Tell me about the book because these life experiences are obviously what kind of crafted you and your story in this memoir.

ALEXIS JONES: Yeah. The book really covers, especially in detail, which is the story arc about my father and that love and about really reframing what it means to be a parent. It captures the journey of, I tell everyone that everything sometimes has to go terribly wrong so that it can eventually go terribly right. So that journey is a wild journey of me and I hop in a car with my husband on the other side of our miscarriage, our best friend who was heartbroken for totally different reasons, and we do this month long cross country RV trip. And so a lot of that is the discovery of healing and just creating a space for all the broken pieces to be picked up.

ALEXIS JONES: And it's never the way that it started out, but I can honestly see on the other side of all of this that it's more beautiful. And the biggest takeaway I had was two things. One, that there's always, and if there's anyone listening to this, this is the one thing I want them to hear, that there's always purpose to our pain and that time is the only revealer. And when I look back at the life we were living, it was a divine intervention for me that I can see that now with 2020. I was on the trajectory of running for office in Texas. There were all these things that were out of alignment with really the life that I wanted to live.

ALEXIS JONES: And on our RV trip, we ended up stumbling upon Bozeman, Montana, which if you would've ever told me that my husband and I, fifth generation Texans would now, I am calling you from Bozeman, Montana. We moved to Montana, which my parents, nobody understood, but there was purpose to all of that. And the other piece is that even in our darkest of darkest moments, there are glimmers of joy that still exist and that we have to fight to see them. And sometimes in my darkest of darkest moments, and I know we can talk about how wild the world is right now, that there are moments where walking outside just to check the mail and I would feel the sunshine come across my face and it would warm my face for those 30 seconds.

ALEXIS JONES: And I'd be like, okay, this was my moment of joy today. It was that small, that tiny, almost insignificant. And those are the moments that saved my life in the darkness because I could slowly start collecting in them. And eventually when I could finally see the light at the end of the tunnel and I actually end the book, we still didn't know how we were going to get pregnant. And that's the wild thing is that I end the book being like, I have no idea. I don't know. But every single door is open and I'm open to however it's going to unfold. And so of course my publisher's like, how about the next book?

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: The sequel. Yes, I was just thinking about that.

ALEXIS JONES: Yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I even have a title for it.

ALEXIS JONES: Oh, what is it? Tell me.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Terribly right.

ALEXIS JONES: Terribly right. I got to write that down.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Alexis Jones. And you still have embryo in the freezer?

ALEXIS JONES: One more embryo. Yeah. By the way, my husband casually was like, "Hey babe, what about round two?" And I was like, "Bro, we are eight months out. I'm going to need a minute." And he was like, "Yeah, what do you think? Four more months?" I'm like, "Oh my God." I'm like, "We're going to do this again, aren't we?" And he is like, "Yeah, I think so." And I mean, that's what's insane.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: A trilogy.

ALEXIS JONES: Yeah, exactly. So we're going to give it another whirl.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Amazing. Oh my gosh. I have to tell you something right after this. But in the meantime, a few things. One is just a friend of mine did IVF-made embryos and had one of them as a baby, and then she had three more in the freezer. And she kept telling me, she just kept saying it as like, "Oh yeah, I got three in the freezer, three in the freezer." And then one day I was there and she offered me a Klondike bar and I'm like, "No way. I'm not eating anything from your freezer."

ALEXIS JONES: I don't want to know. I'm not even opening your freezer.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: There's nothing I would do for that Klondike bar. Anyway, so there's that. And then Terribly Right hopefully is your next thing. Alexis Jones, you have inspired me so much. You have shifted my paradigm on what's important in life right here in this one hour, and you have really helped me, I hope. I know your energy and presence is going to be there when we all do. We have darker times and lighter times. In my next dark moment, I hope I can cling onto the passion and wisdom and love billionaires that you have shared with me. Thank you, thank you, thank you. Where can we find you online?

ALEXIS JONES: I'm on social media, Instagram. I am @AlexisJones and AlexisJones. com.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Thank

ALEXIS JONES: You

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