A Birth Story with Stephanie Devlin

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IN THIS EPISODE

Restaurateur and mother of two Stephanie Devlin talks with Dr. Elliot Berlin, DC about her long, hard road to parenthood — an ectopic pregnancy, a miscarriage, and an unplanned C-section — and the birth that finally felt like hers.

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 focused chiropractor, Dr. Elliot Berlin. My guest today is a restaurateur from Vancouver, British Columbia. She is now a mother of two, but had a very challenging journey getting there. We'll talk about ectopic pregnancy, miscarriage, a dramatic epidural experience, unplanned cesarean birth, and her healing home birth experience. Stephanie Devlin, welcome to the podcast.

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: Thank you so much for having me. I'm so happy to be here.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I mean, gosh, I thank you in advance for sharing all these difficult things that you experienced. I'm so glad we're talking to you on the other end of it when we can sort of both look back and say, "Wow, okay, we're here." But a lot of people are going to be in the middle of it, and I think it's nice to hear from somebody who plowed through and made it to the other side. So let's jump right in. Where are you from originally?

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: I am born and raised and still live in Vancouver, Canada.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: You don't really have the accent. I always point that out. I don't know why. What's that about?

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: Okay. Yeah, so I feel like the East Coast has more of an accent, but the West Coast is not as strong. So I don't know, maybe that's why.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Well, I'll take what I can get. I do believe you're in Canada. Okay, restaurateur. Tell me, is this what you always wanted to do?

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: Oh, no. I actually went to university for social work, like youth work. And when I finished school, I went into the field and it just didn't feel quite like what I wanted to do. And all through my younger years, I was a server at a restaurant, so I just sort of moved up through the ranks in that restaurant and decided, you know what? I actually just love restaurants. Why am I trying to stop doing restaurants and go into youth work when this is really my passion? So I bought out one of the partners in the restaurant and ended up buying out the second partner about a year ago. So it's now fully mine and I love it. It's exactly what I want to be doing.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Okay. For one thing you said about an oot, so now I believe it. But also what kind of restaurant?

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: It's a franchise. It's called Brown Social House. So it's kind of American Canadian cuisine with a little bit of Asian fusion and great cocktails, good wine, good fun.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: You had me there. Good pitch. So I wonder how often a server just buys out the chain?

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: I'm the first one in my franchise. So there's one other person that has done something relatively similar, but didn't start as low on the food chain as me, but I actually started as a host in this franchise. So I have been with the company since I was 16 years old.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, wow.

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: So yeah, I've been around for a long time and it just kind of felt like the right time when I made the big leap and yeah, I'm happy I didn't.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I like how you said food chain.

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: Yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Okay. So restaurant touring is usually hard work.

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: It is. I mean, it's been a long journey. I worked my butt off for the first five years that I was in the restaurant industry seriously as assistant manager, general manager, and early ownership. And then when I had my first son, I took my first sort of step back and it was really difficult to do it because I was such a workaholic for so many years that I really had to focus on not focusing on the restaurant.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah, I can imagine. It becomes part of your identity.

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: It does. Yeah. The second you wake up till the second you turn your phone off before bed, it's constantly there.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I guess that was your first baby.

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: It was my first baby. I still think it's my first baby. Yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah. Okay. But now you have other babies, and as we mentioned in the intro, it was an easy role to get there. So parenthood, motherhood, was it something you though

about as a kid, as a teenager?

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: I always wanted to be a mom. I was that kid at the playground that was playing house and I was always the mom. And yeah, I always knew I wanted to be a mom, so that was never a question.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And how did you meet your husband?

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: My husband and I met at summer camp.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh my goodness. How old?

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: We met as campers. I mean when we met, my husband's four years older than me, so I was 12 and he was 16 and we were just friends for quite a while. And then we became staff together and then that's sort of when our journey together began. But yeah, summer camp. Still

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Together.

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: I don't know if there's a cuter story.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah. Well, I met my wife in summer camp.

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: No way.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah.

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: Wow, that's amazing.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Like 20 couples.

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: Yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Slightly older. We were staff, but also teenagers. And yeah, we got hitched and here we are.

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: Yeah, exactly. Yeah. We got married at our summer camp.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh,

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: Wow. Yeah. Yeah, we're still together.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: We met at summer camp and then we went back engaged and then we went back married the next summer, but we didn't want to have kids right away, so we stopped going back.

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: It seemed like

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: It was going to push us forward somehow that camp had magical powers.

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: It does have magical powers.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Summer camp is just like a different... Yeah, I don't know. It's a different element universe. It's where fairytales can happen.

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: Absolutely.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And also where you can get your front tooth knocked out by a tennis racket. Okay.

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: Oh yeah. Okay. Sorry for another day.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yes. So met the hobby pretty young. Did you guys talk about kids? Is that something he also dreamt about at the park?

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: Yeah, he always wanted kids as well. I don't even think it was ever a real conversation we had. It was just, of course, we were going to have kids.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Do you each have siblings?

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: I have an older brother. He's 21 months older than me, and my husband has an older sister. They have different moms, but she is 12 years older than him, so yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: He's like an only child.

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: He's basically an only child. Yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: In terms of cohort at least.

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: Yeah, exactly.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And you're both the youngest?

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: We are both the youngest,

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yep.

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: The babies.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: The

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: Babies.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: So it makes sense. The babies want to be parents. Okay. How soon after you got married did you plan out having kids or it just happened?

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: It was planned. So we got married about seven years ago, and we had already decided we wanted to start trying a few months before we got married.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Wait,

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: You just

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Decided a few months before you got married, or you started trying a few months before you got married?

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: We decided and started trying a few months.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, okay, fine.

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: Yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Well, you just don't waste any time.

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: No, I know. And I just didn't really care about being pregnant at my wedding, but I wasn't in the end. But we didn't try, try, try. We weren't putting our all into it at that point, but I wasn't sure I was pregnant or not at my wedding.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Could have been.

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: Yeah, could have been.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: But you weren't. But you weren't. How soon after that did you get pregnant?

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: I got pregnant just a few months after that.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Were you putting your all into it?

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: That was putting our all into it. That was the second month of really trying, was we got pregnant.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Calculating trying?

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: Yeah. Yeah. Tracking my ovulation and -

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, really trying?

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: Yeah, really trying. We really wanted to get going. Yeah. So that was a few months after we got married and two months after we started trying.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: How old were you then?

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: I was 26.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And still, your older sibling was 21 months older than you?

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: Correct. Yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: See how good I am with the math? Okay, 26. In your area, is that a typical time for people to get married or is that a little ahead of the curve?

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: No, that's early for sure over here. I'd say that the average is probably early 30s here.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah, so probably somewhere around here. Okay, so both ahead of the curve. And did you feel it first or did you test for it first?

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: No, I felt it. All the times I've been pregnant, I've known before I took a test, very certain my whole -

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Is there specific symptoms or just a gut feeling?

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: I always get really bloated almost immediately, and I just feel different. I feel like I don't want to drink wine. I don't know. It just all sort of changes and I feel different. So I was pretty certain. And then I tested from almost the second that I ovulated to when I should have missed my period, and then it took until about then to have a positive test, but probably took 12 tests in between and it was finally positive.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Wow. After a few months of trying, you start buying them at Costco.

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: Oh, I know. Yeah, it's an expensive journey if you buy enough pregnancy tests.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: What was the feeling like when you got that positive?

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: We were so excited over the month.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Did you see it together?

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: No, I saw it by myself, actually. I was with my friends actually, and my husband was out with his friends, and I didn't tell my friends, and then just went home later that evening and told him, and we were just over the moon.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Wait, so you tested out with your friends?

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: I tested out with my friends because I went to the drug store on my way to my friend's house and I was like, "I can't wait any longer. I'm sure that this is the time that I'll get the positive." So I don't know, I just did it.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: You were all in. Yeah. All in. And then what was his expression when you told him? How did you tell him?

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: I just showed him the test. So we were sitting on the couch and I just pulled it out of my pocket and showed it to him, and just very similar to mine. We were both just like, "Oh my goodness." Just so excited.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I guess whatever he was doing with his friends probably paled in comparison.

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: I'd say so.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: So super ecstatic after a bit of time trying, obviously very, very, very eager to be pregnant and have a child, both of you, sounds like, but then that pregnancy did not carry through. Let's take a little break and we come back, we'll find out what happened next. Welcome back

to the podcast. We're talking to Stephanie Devlin all the way over there in British Columbia. Okay. And before the break, we got to the exciting part where you are pregnant and you share it with your husband and you're elated. Unfortunately, that pregnancy didn't work out. What happened?

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: So that pregnancy ended in an ectopic pregnancy, which was something I had never heard of before it happening to me. So it was quite shocking to me. I just was at work and all of a sudden started feeling quite a lot of pain, and I thought this is interesting. Maybe this is what implantation feels like or something like that because I really had very little information. And so I called -

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Just in case anybody listening doesn't know what it is, ectopic pregnancy is a pregnancy, an egg becomes fertilized, but it starts to develop outside the uterus, usually in a fallopian tube. So there is a baby that is growing, it's just not in a place where it can survive. And of course you though that was implantation, which could be exciting.

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: Yeah. I was thinking, okay, well yeah, I'm sure pregnancy isn't all comfortable, so maybe this pain is just implantation or something along those lines. So I called my husband and just said, "I'm having some pain, but I don't think it's anything to really worry about." And went home after work, and then throughout the night, it just got really painful and I wanted to go to the hospital and just check it out. And we got there and my HCG levels were very, very low. So it didn't seem like a pregnancy that was going to last was what the nurses told me.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: So that's your blood test, pregnancy blood test, which is not just a yes or no pregnant, but quantitative. It tells you if the pregnancy on a chemical level, hormonal level tells you if the pregnancy is growing according to plan and you were low, so something seemed off.

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: Yeah, it just seemed off. And they did an ultrasound and it was so early that they were not wanting to give me really a yes or no of what was going on, but basically said they couldn't see anything in my uterus, but that maybe there would be soon. And so I went home still in so much pain, and the next day called my midwife and was like, "I think something is wrong." Went back to the hospital and they found that it was in fact in my fallopian tube, or they think it was. They didn't actually ever fully see it, but they said, "Okay, we think that this is an ectopic pregnancy." So I took this little white pill and was supposed to try and force it out of me to force a miscarriage of sorts.

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: And that didn't seem to help, and I kept having to go back for blood tests every two or three days to find where my HCG levels were. At this point, I'm starting to bleed, so I know that I'm miscarrying, but I had to go back for, it was probably six weeks-ish of blood tests every two or three days.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh My goodness. Yeah.

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: And the HCG levels would barely drop. So it would be like, I think I started around 900 and then it was like 880. It was minuscule amounts, and it took so long, so long for me to get to zero, which was the goal, obviously, to know where the baby was and what was happening and make sure I was safe. But nothing ever exploded in my fallopian tube or anything really scary like that, but it was such a long journey of grief. I just wanted it to be over so bad.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I can imagine every day. What was going on in your life at that time?

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: I was working my butt off at the restaurant, so I would leave at noon, go up to get my blood test, and then we have this app where you can check your blood test results throughout the day, and usually by the end of the day, they're there. So I would be obsessively checking it while I'm at work. And yeah, I was just so busy, and it was just really sad, and it was just really hard to have it last for so long.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I'm sorry that you had that, and especially the prolonged element, and especially you wanted it so bad and were so excited and felt like you were on your way. And I think most people have a first ectopic pregnancy, never heard of it. So it's just a lot of learning and experiencing something that's really hard physically and emotionally. It can be very hard to get through and have to put on a happy face at the restaurant. I can't imagine.

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: Exactly.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Okay. So you get down to zero, and then were you given any advice on trying again, wait, go for it right away?

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: They said wait for one normal cycle, was what my doctor said at the time. So we did that, and then we started trying right away, a second time.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: So one cycle of wine.

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: Exactly, yes. I got a few good glasses in there and then -

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And then one cycle of back to the monitor.

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: Exactly. And we got pregnant the first try for the second pregnancy. So I was pregnant right away. Again, I knew immediately almost. By the morning, I was like, "I'm pretty sure I'm pregnant again." And yep, tested throughout that two-week period as well, and finally got my positive. And again, we were very excited, but I was much more anxious this time thinking like, "Okay, what's going to happen and is this one going to be successful?" But I was really trying to be positive, but it was just really difficult. So I was pregnant for six to eight weeks. I forget the amount, somewhere around there. And then I went for an ultrasound because I was nervous. I just basically begged my midwives to let me get an ultrasound before I was supposed to.

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: And they let me, and I got there, and they said there's no heartbeat. And I just was just so devastated, just totally gutted.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I knew you were going to say that because I know the story, and still my heart sank when you said it.

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: Yeah. It's just the three words that they haunt me. There's no heartbeat. It's just such a sad thing to hear.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Did you go because you felt like something was off or you just needed to know because of what happened last time?

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: I just needed to know. I was so anxious and every day was hard, and I just wanted to see something that was certain, and I just wanted to see that heartbeat. I had already gone for a ultrasound at six weeks, and there was a heartbeat. And so I went back, and it must have been more closer to nine or 10 weeks in reality, and that's when there was no heartbeat.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: So this one was in your uterus?

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: Yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And there was a heartbeat, and the beta HCGs were taken off the way they're supposed to, the blood test.

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: Yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And are you eight weeks in, nine weeks in? It sounds like you're very anxious, which makes a lot of sense, but are you also like, "Oh, phew, we made it past."

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: Yeah, there's this website where you can track the days and find out what your percentage of miscarrying is at that point. And I was doing that every day like, "Okay, now it's 88% that I won't miscarry. Now it's 91% I won't miscarry." So yeah, it was devastating. I still think back to that moment in that room and I could just tear up. It's just,

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah. I'm so sorry. I'm so sorry.

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: Yeah. Thank you.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: In terms of the miscarriage itself, I mean, you saw no heartbeat, but do you wait for a miscarriage or do they induce a miscarriage? Were there options?

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: Yeah, there was options. So they asked me if I wanted to induce it with the little white pill, and I didn't want to initially, and I almost didn't believe them. I almost didn't believe that there wasn't a heartbeat, and I just wanted it to all happen naturally so that I was certain that I wasn't making it happen, sort of. I know that sounds crazy because they're looking at an ultrasound, they can't see a heartbeat, but I was just like, "No, I don't want to believe it." So I didn't do anything and just went home, and it was taking too long. And I ended up talking to my midwives, and they offered the pill again, and I took it, and then the miscarriage started that night, and I just did it naturally at home in my shower.

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: And yeah, it was graphic and sad and much more painful than I had anticipated.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Alone?

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: No, my husband was there. Actually, my husband was on a trip with his friends, and I called him, was like, "You got to come home. This is much worse than I expected." And he drove through the night, got home at 1:00 in the morning, and I was lying in the bathtub with the shower on me, and yeah, it was something.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: It's heartbreaking. Now, you say midwives a lot. Is that the typical in Vancouver, in Canada in general, where you're generally under the care of midwives?

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: No, I don't know what the percentage is here, but a lot of people still go with an OB - GYN, and a lot of people, especially in Vancouver, are sort of starting to go more towards the midwives, but there's still a lot of people that go through an OB.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Do you have a choice?

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: You have a choice, yeah, and they're both covered under our medical.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Okay. So one question before I move on. Did you have concerns like now it happened twice, so to speak? Is there something wrong? Am I doing something? Because that's what a lot of people express, but I don't know. For you, what was the thought process?

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: Yeah, I was definitely thinking that. I also was sort of like, "I can't do this again for a while," because I had just been through it twice so close, and I didn't want to start trying again for a while because I felt like I needed to get some therapy and really grieve the loss, and especially the one that was later on, I really felt like there was a baby in me and I was growing somebody, so I needed time and we took that.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Was there any suggestions from your midwives about testing or waiting?

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: No, neither of those things actually. They didn't seem concerned about infertility or anything like that at that point. I mean, I was, but at that point I was anxious about everything.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: But also still fairly young.

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: Yeah, I was still 26. Till

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: 26. Yeah.

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: Or I may have been 27 at that point, but yeah, I was still young.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: When did you feel ready to try again?

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: I think we waited about three years, two and a half, three years. Yeah. So I really needed the time, and my husband felt the same. We just felt like we needed to grieve the loss and wait until we really felt ready. And we did. We waited, I bought the restaurant during that time, and we actually set ourselves up really well, and we feel like maybe it was meant to be in the saddest way possible, but in the long run, our timing was much better when we had our successful pregnancy.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And it was both of you ready at the same time?

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: Yeah, it was definitely, it was me that brought it up. We were just kind of sitting on the couch one day and I was like, "So what do you think? Do we start trying again?" And he was like, "Yeah, maybe we should start trying in a couple of months or something." And I was like, "I'm ovulating." And he was like, "Well, okay, sure. What's the difference?" Wait,

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: What were you doing to prevent pregnancy before that?

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: I haven't done much to prevent pregnancy for a very long time. I've tracked my cycles forever, basically, since I started trying with the first miscarriage, and I'm just kind of careful with timing, and knock on wood, haven't had any issues.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Okay, so you really use your tracking, so when you want to get pregnant, you track and plan that way, and when you want to not get pregnant, you track around it.

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: Exactly.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Okay. So that leaves you the spontaneity of saying, "Well, I'm ovulating."

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: Yeah, exactly. And we got pregnant after about two months.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: So pretty quick.

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: Pretty quick, yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I mean, in general, I don't know if that gave you any peace of mind, but it sounds like you're fertile. It's not that -

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: Yeah, I never had issues getting pregnant, for sure. That never stressed me out, but the stress was keeping the baby.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Now we're three years down. Are you still feeling the anxiety? Same thing, you felt like you were pregnant and you knew it right away and then did five dozen pee tests?

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: No, this time I would not allow myself to do the tests until I was missing my period. So I waited until the two weeks was over, and then I took a test and it was immediately positive.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, already different.

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: Yeah, it was different. It was different.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Anxiety level?

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: Top-notch, 100%. 100% anxiety.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: How is your anxiousness in general? Are you an anxious person or generally laid back?

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: Not at all. Very Laid back. Yeah, totally. I'm very laid back. I feel like I deal with things being thrown at me pretty well. I run a restaurant, so I'm pretty good at sinking on my feet and not getting too stressed out. And pregnancy was different for that. I was anxious for my whole pregnancy with my first.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: As one would be. Again, we have some parallels here. My wife and I struggled with fertility before we had our first baby and also had miscarriages. And yeah, with our first son that was born, I kept thinking, okay, it's going to calm down. We're past the first trimester, we're

past the second trimester. It's all good. He's viable. He's almost... And still, you don't believe it until you're holding them, and then maybe a month after that.

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: Totally. Yeah, 100%. I felt it the whole time.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Okay. So how was the first trimester for you in that pregnancy?

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: So I was physically pretty great. I had very little nausea. I mean, I didn't sleep well, but I think that was mostly based on being so anxious. I was constantly thinking about miscarrying again. And besides the anxiety, I'd say the first trimester was as easy as it could really be.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: But in terms of last time you were like, "I need to have ultrasounds," did you push for that again?

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: No, I didn't. I was trying to convince myself I wasn't anxious, which -

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I got to try that.

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: Yeah, I mean, it sort of worked. Sometimes it convinced me that I wasn't, but no, I didn't push for anything. I did everything on their timeline and had an ultrasound at eight weeks and everything looked good, and then another one at 12 weeks and everything still looked good. So at that point, my anxiety went down a tiny bit, but I wouldn't say it was gone by any means.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And when did you tell people?

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: So we started telling people right away, but only for a few very close people. I told three or four of my friends, my husband told a couple of his friends, and we told our immediate family, but we didn't tell everybody until about 13 weeks.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Did those people in your inner circle know about the first two pregnancies?

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: They did. Basically, I only told the people that knew my whole journey that I was pregnant again. Also, honestly, I knew I needed the support if I did miscarry again, so I wanted those people to know the whole journey.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: In terms of birth planning, did you have a specific idea of what you wanted from your birth in this pregnancy, and had it been something you thought about in the earlier pregnancies?

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: No. In the earlier pregnancies, I hadn't thought ahead really at all. With this pregnancy, I thought I had a great birth plan, but in hindsight, I don't feel that that was really true. But I had a doula, I had midwives. We have midwife teams here. I don't know if you guys have that, but we have about five midwives on a team. So I hired the team and a doula, and my plan was unmedicated, but in the hospital.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Okay. Did labor start spontaneously?

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: It did, yep. Started spontaneously. I was adamant not to get induced.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Were you near your due date?

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: I was, yeah. So they offered me the stretch and sweep a few days before my due date, and I said no to that.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, You said no?

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: No, I wasn't interested. I wasn't over my due date. I didn't really understand why I needed to push it faster, and my doula was kind of warning me about that as like, "You don't really need to do that, but if it's something you want to push for, then go for it." But it wasn't something I felt I needed at the time, so I went into labor on my due date.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, that's so awkward.

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: Very, very punctual children. Yeah, I went into labor on my due date, just started with contractions. It didn't start with my water breaking. I just started having surges. It went on for, I'll tell you, four 38 hours in the end, but went to the hospital around the 12-hour mark and they sent me home. They were like, "Oh, you're not even close." And I was like, "What? Oh my goodness, this isn't close."

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, wow. So was it overwhelming in terms of each surge or just mentally overwhelming or?

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: The pain was pretty overwhelming. Also, honestly, it was mental too. I was in a lot of pain and then I thought I must be eight centimeters dilated. And then they checked me, which I also had told myself I wouldn't do. But then when they offered it at the hospital, I was like, "Oh, I really want to know." And so they checked me -

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: But then you didn't really want to know.

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: Yeah, and I did not want to know. I would've been correct. So they were like, "Yeah, you're about two and a half, three centimeters dilated." And I was like, "Oh my gosh, you have to be kidding me."

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Wow. They send you home being in labor for that long and already two and a half to three?

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: Oh, yeah. Yeah. They send you home easily here. I guess it's like a

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Restaurant. They need those tables.

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: They need the tables.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: All right. Well, if you're going home, I'm taking a little break.

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: Okay, fair Enough.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: When we come back, we'll get the rest of the story. Welcome back. We're talking to Stephanie Devlin, and at this point she's in labor for quite some time. It is physically intense, and she goes to the hospital only to be sent back home two and a half to three centimeters and in a

lot of discomfort. What happens next?

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: So I went home and I got in the bath and I just wanted to focus on my surges and just be alone. So I told my husband to go get some rest and I just lied in the bath and I just felt them and felt them. And at around the 25-hour mark, I though, okay, this has to be intense enough to go to the hospital. So I woke up my husband, got him to call the midwife and say, okay, we're going to go. She can barely talk. This has got to be it. So we meet her at the hospital, they do another check and I'm seven centimeters dilated.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, that's better.

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: Yeah, it was so much better. I was so relieved. I was ecstatic. I was shouting and I was so excited that I was finally getting closer. So we get admitted, we get into the room, and things start to seriously slow down. I'm barely feeling any surges anymore. And in the bath, we have baths at the hospital as well that we can use. And so I'm in the bath and I'm not comfortable, but I can't talk. My voice was just not working. And so I was knowing I needed to get out of this bath, but I couldn't do it and just ended up being in the bath with almost no contractions for six or seven hours. So I'm at 31 hours at this point and exhausted. And then everything starts to really pick up. And my midwife says, "Okay, I think you're really getting there."

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: And then things got so, so, so intense. I felt like my abdomen was being torn apart and the contractions were just so insane. And they had asked me probably, without an exaggeration, close to 10 times if I wanted an epidural. And around the 40-hour mark, they asked me one more time and I was like, "Yes, I do. Okay, let's get me an epidural." So I got out of the bath and was sitting on the bed waiting for the anesthesiologist to come, and he finally gets there and puts it in, and I feel it in my toe, which was the weirdest feeling ever. So I'm like -

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Wait, you feel the numbness in your toe?

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: No, I just feel when the doctor hits your knee with that -

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Reflex hammer.

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: Yeah, with the reflex hammer, I felt a reflex in my toe.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, interesting.

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: And so I said out loud, I was like, "Whoa, I felt that in my toe." And I just saw everybody look at each other and my doula's face went white. I was like, "What just happened?" But then I immediately stopped feeling pain and I was like, "Ah." So I was kind of over the moon, to be honest, that I wasn't feeling this pain anymore. So I'm sitting up on the bed and they put it in, I feel it in my toe, and then I go completely numb from basically my neck down. And I lie back on the bed and think, "This seems a little weird, but there's no pain, so this is great." And I can't move anything once I lie down. I have a little bit of movement in my arms, but very, very little and not strong enough to feel like I could actually do anything with Them.

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: And my legs cannot move at all, and my stomach, and I can't do anything. So I didn't know if this is just what an epidural was or not, and nobody was really saying anything.

Everybody was just sidestepping, and I was like, "Oh, well, whatever, I'm not in pain." So everybody kind of left and said, "Why don't you take a nap?" And so my husband and I both take a nap, and at about 47 hours, somebody comes back in, the doula and midwife comes back in, and my midwife checks me and says, "Okay, you're nine and a half centimeters. Let's start pushing." And I was like, "Okay." But also knowing how? How am I going to push?

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Because you still can't feel anything?

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: I can't feel anything, nothing. If somebody punched me in the leg, I would have had no idea. And so I sort of start pushing, but I'm pushing from my face. I have no idea what I'm doing. I can't feel anything in my abdomen, so I don't even know if the pushing's working. And eventually after about an hour of this fake pushing, they tell me, okay, we're going to have to do a C-section. And I was just gutted. I had put in, at this point, almost 48 hours of labor and gotten an epidural, and now it was just all wasted.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: But why a C-section at that moment?

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: The reason was because I couldn't push. So they could see the baby's head, but there was nothing I could do to make the baby move. And they were worried that we were getting to a point where the baby wasn't safe anymore, basically.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And shutting off the epidural wasn't an option?

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: They tried it. So basically what happened was that they gave me a spinal by accident instead of an epidural. So they put it in the wrong place. Too deep. Way too deep. Yeah. And so ultimately it couldn't really be turned off. I was just numb. So they rushed me into... Well, nothing was really rushed actually. They took me to get a C-section, took me into the room, and they didn't have to add anything to me to be numbed more because I was already completely numb. I mean, at that point, I was just so happy that I was about to meet my baby because it had been such a long road, and when they told me that in 15 minutes, I'd probably have my baby once they took me into the operating room.

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: I was just so relieved at that point and so tired, and it had been so long that I was like, "Okay, let's go. Let's get this baby out of me." I mean, they weren't wrong. They pulled me into this room and I probably had him on me eight minutes later.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Whoa.

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: And yeah, they pulled him straight up. There's a picture of it where the surgeon's holding him straight up and I can see him over the curtain, and then they put him straight onto me. At that point, I was just so relieved and so happy that he was safe and he was out.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: It's like the opposite feeling after everything you experienced in the first

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: Two pregnancies.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Totally.

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: Exactly.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I feel chills actually. Okay. How was recovery for you?

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: Honestly, I loved it. I loved that I couldn't do anything for two weeks. I couldn't get up to go clean the house. I couldn't go out and push the stroller. There was no pressure on like, "Hey, get right back to what you were doing before," because I had just had surgery.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Forced to take a little downtime.

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: It was great. Yeah. We were naked for about two weeks. My baby was just on me, and we did so much skin to skin, and I had so much time to figure out breastfeeding, and yeah, there was no timeline on anything. So the healing went great. After about two weeks, I was going back on my walks and yeah, it all went pretty well.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: That's great. Okay. And to fast-forward because of time, when you got pregnant again, was that planned?

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: That was planned as well, yeah. So this time it was the first try, not the second try, but we decided we were ready to start trying for a second and got pregnant that month.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: How old was your first at that point?

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: My first was three. Yeah, he had just turned three.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And with that pregnancy, anxious, excited, a mix of both?

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: Much less anxious. I would take it down 80%, just really excited, and I had so many plans. The second I found out I was pregnant, actually right after I had my first, I got sort of obsessed with birth. I was watching videos on Instagram and talking to birth workers, and I just knew that my next birth was going to be different and would basically do anything to make that happen. And so as soon as I found out I was pregnant, this time I started, started working.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah. So what did you do differently?

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: So I had been going to chiro, to the chiropractor for that whole time in between the two, which I think has changed my whole body composition. And I went the whole time I was pregnant, which made me so much more comfortable while I was pregnant. I think that -

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I'm going to start believing in that.

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: I know, right? If I was in LA.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Come by a new time.

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: Thank you. Yeah, so I was going to chiropractor, I went to pelvic floor physio, and I really think that the main thing I did was listening to positive birth stories a lot on your podcast. I spent hours listening to stories on your podcast and other podcasts and Instagram stories of just it going well to basically convince myself it doesn't need to be like the last time.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And what was the vision for you as you got closer?

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: So my vision changed throughout. Initially, my husband was really nervous about a home birth, and so my first thought was home birth. Then when I brought it up with him, he was like, "Oh, I don't know. It just seems scary." So I just kind of respected that at the time. I was like, "Okay, that's fine. We'll do a hospital birth, but I'm going to do it way differently and have so many more boundaries up. I'm not going to get any cervical checks. I'm going to do this my way. I'm not going to be listening to nurses telling me to push, and I'm not going to be having them talk on the sidelines while I'm in the middle of a contraction." So that was my plan at the beginning.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And then what changed?

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: So I started going to these birth circles that my doula puts on, and they basically are just either pregnant people or newly postpartum people come and talk about birth and learn about positive stories that people have just had. So I kept just hearing these amazing stories of people having their babies at home. So I sort of started to dangle the idea again with my husband, like, "What do you think? Do you think maybe we should give it a try?" And he was so supportive and was just like, "Whatever you want, this is your body, your birth. I want you to be comfortable."

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: So I went back and forth probably three or four times of like, "No, actually no, I just want to be in the hospital because what if something goes wrong and I've had a C-section and the midwives really try and scare you?" Every time I went to my appointments, it depended on the midwife. I would have one midwife that was really pro home birth, and then the second one would be, I don't know if you... I had one actually say to me, "If you were my daughter, I'd tell you not to." And that's the one that almost convinced me because she was the one that was at the birth for my son and I loved her. She was the reason I went back to that midwifery clinic. So when she said that to me, I was like, "Oh, okay, maybe we don't again."

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: And so I go back again and then I go back to not doing it at home. And then at 38 weeks, I go to another birth circle and I feel quite confident that I'm going to change my mind and do it at home. So I talked to my husband, he's like, "Whatever you want."

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Wow, that's getting close. Is it the same midwives that deliver at home or at the hospital?

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: It is,

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah. Okay.

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: Yeah, so it's supposed to be anyways. Then I went to one more birth circle on my due date. So it was my actual due date and I wasn't in labor, so I was like, "Maybe I'll just go." And when I was there, one woman was giving her story of having her baby at home, and I was like, "Okay, I'm doing it. There's nothing that will stop me now." And about seven hours later, that's when my home birth journey began.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Wow. Okay. So a different kind of rollercoaster. How did the birth proceed?

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: So my husband and I got into bed around 100, and I just said to him something along the lines of, "Well, I guess not today." And he said something funny, and I laughed really hard, and then I thought I peed a little bit. I was like, "Oh my God, I think I'm losing control of my bladder already, and I think I just peed." And so I got up to go to the bathroom, and then as soon as I walked into the bathroom, the rest of my water broke. So it wasn't pee, it was my water. Nice. Yeah, so that's how this birth started, was with my water breaking, but with my first, it was 40 hours in that my water broke. So it started completely different, which felt really positive to me at the time.

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: When the water broke to start it, I was like, "Okay, it's a different experience. I already feel like this is different." And I said to my husband, "Okay, let's just go to bed." We were so excited. We put on some music, and my husband was running around cleaning up and whatever. And so I was like, "No, no, we should go to bed. Let's just climb in bed and get a little bit of rest." And so we climb in bed, and about 10 minutes later, I have a contraction, and I'm like, "Okay, that was definitely a contraction." So I tell my husband, "Why don't you go call your sister and your dad? Let them know we might be having a baby tonight. Who knows?

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: It could take 48 hours again, but I'm already feeling a lot of movement, so let's at least let them know." So he leaves the bedroom and I stay in bed, and he's probably on the phone for 10 minutes, and In That 10-minute span, I've had three contractions.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, wow. Okay. They're close.

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: They're close. And so I was like, "There's no way. It's not going to be this fast. This is crazy." And so he comes back into the bedroom and I'm like, "Hey, I think things are moving pretty quick, but why don't you just get in? Let's see if we can sleep." And so he climbs into bed, and immediately I have another contraction, and then another one, maybe two minutes later. And I'm like, "Okay, I think we probably should call midwives and the doula. I don't know, maybe it's premature, but this is feeling pretty intense." So he goes into the living room again, calls the midwives and the doula, and I move into the bath. I'm having surge after surge. They're very close together. And I say to him, "I don't want our son to hear this.

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: It's making me feel like I'm not as comfortable." So he ends up taking our son, who at this point is in his bedroom right next to our bathroom, upstairs to where my sister-in-law lives one floor above us in the apartment, which was very convenient.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, convenient.

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: Yes. So she takes him upstairs, and in the span of him taking my son upstairs, I am feeling like I can not talk. I'm really in it. And my midwife and doula show up around that point. And this is also when I found out that I was going to have a substitute midwife that I haven't met.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Not from your group?

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: No. So two people were at other births and then three people were out of town, so I get this.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Okay. So somebody you've never met before?

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: Somebody I've never met before, and immediately I don't have a good connection with her, which was very stressful to me initially. So she's coming in and she's not telling me she's going to check the heartbeat, and she's just poking the doppler into the bath. And I just was like, "No, no, no. I need some space from you." And I was really stern with her and was just like, "I want very little contact, and I don't really talk to people like that. I'm kind of a pleaser."

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I'm getting chills again. I like this.

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: And I just was like, "No, I don't want you doing this very often, and please ask at least." So she leaves, and my doula and my husband come back into the bathroom, and this is probably maybe two hours into my labor at this point, and it's intense. Again, I feel like my abdomen is tearing apart, but I'm also, at the same time, I'm so happy for all these feelings. Every surge I got, I was like, I just kept telling myself the same mantra that I told myself to do. And I was like, "Every surge gets me closer to meeting my baby. All this pain is to meet her." And that totally changed my whole mind frame, and everything just kept going so smoothly.

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: And I got out of the bath, went into my bed, and lied there for quite a while, and had maybe another two hours of contractions, everything feeling very normal and safe. And my doula kept saying to me, "You're safe. This is all right. Everything that's happening, you're doing great." And I needed to hear those words. They all sounded so kind of standard to me, but they were exactly what I needed to hear. I needed to know that what I was doing was the right thing. So my midwife kept trying to come into the room and do cervical checks or check the heartbeat, and every once in a while I'd let her check the heartbeat, but I had no interest in the cervical checks. And that was, I think, really positive for me in this birth.

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: So I was in my bed, and then I just got this really strong urge to stand up. So my husband was standing beside the bed, and I was like, "Oh, you have to move. Move, move." And I stood up, and I just started pushing. I had no idea that this is how it worked. I didn't know that my body was going to physiologically push the baby out. I couldn't stop it. I had at one point the midwife come in and be like, "I'd like to check your cervix to make sure that you're ready to push." And I yelled at her, "There's no way I could stop pushing," and closed the door to the bedroom and locked the midwife out. I didn't want her there. And it was just my husband and my doula and me in the bedroom. And my doula was so in the background.

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: She did such a great job of making me feel confident and strong, but with zero interference. She wasn't birthing my baby. She just kept being like, "You're doing this. This is you." And I pushed for probably around two hours. It was pretty long. Actually, I don't know if that's long in the grand scheme of things, but it felt long at the time.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: But you started pushing standing up.

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: No, actually the pushing reflex started when I was still lying down, but then when I stood up, it got really intense.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Did you move into other positions?

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: No, I got up from the bed, and it was almost like somebody moved my body. There was no stopping it. My body was just like, "You need to be up and you need to be bracing yourself on the bed." And so I stood up and I put my hands on the side of my bed, and I was probably there for another maybe half hour-ish pushing. And then the midwife came in and said, "You've been pushing for too long." And I was like, "What?" And my body at that point was a shield. I could barely even hear her. I just knew that I was doing this, and there was nothing somebody else could do to change how it was going to play out. So I kind of heard her and just waved my hand behind me and was like, "Go away." And she was like, "Can you feel the head?"

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: And I actually hadn't put my hand down there to see if I could feel the head, so I did, and I was like, "Yes, yes, the baby's here." So yeah, her head had crowned, and I was feeling the hair on the top of her head. And at that point, I started talking to her. I'm not a very spiritual kind of person, but I felt like we were the same person. And I just was like, "Okay, in the next push, we're going to meet each other, and I can't wait to meet you, and we have this huge life ahead of us." It was just this crazy experience where I just felt like she was listening to me, and that push, she didn't come out, and I was like, "It's okay. It's okay. Neither of us were ready. I wasn't ready either. Let's do it on this push."

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: And we did, and I pushed her head out, and I could not believe it. It was just the most powerful feeling I've ever felt in my life. I could feel her full head outside of me, and my husband's hands were around my hands holding onto her head. Then I just sat there in silence for probably another two minutes with her head out, and then one more push, the rest of her body came out, and my husband caught her and passed her up to me, and I just felt like such a badass. I was like, "I cannot believe I've done this."

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I don't know if you are just an amazing storyteller, but you've gotten me emotional three times in one podcast. I feel now tears of joy for you and triumph, kind of like what I would feel at birth when I attended birth for several years, just that feeling for you.

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: Total euphoria.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah, total euphoria and just a little taste of that is just, I don't know, it's very powerful. Okay, I'm going to go home and process this episode. God bless you. And I don't know if I could have done any of the things that you did. Thank you. Honestly, I have such a great disposition about it. It is inspiring and powerful and sometimes hard to share, and I thank you very much for joining me and sharing it all with me and with our audience. Stephanie, where can we find you online?

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: My Instagram is Stephdev with two Vs.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Ooh, was Stephdev with one V already taken?

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: It was. It sure was.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: All right. Make sure you go for that extra V.

STEPHANIE DEVLIN: Thank you.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Thank you again so much for joining me, and at home, thanks for listening to the Informed Pregnancy Podcast. For more pregnancy and parenting information, visit us online at informedpregnancy. com.

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