Aly Michalka: After Birth

Episode 414 · July 4, 2024 · with Aly Michalka

IN THIS EPISODE

Aly Michalka returns — now a brand-new mom, with husband Steven joining in — to tell Dr. Elliot Berlin, DC the story of her first baby's birth, after a pregnancy spent planning a home birth with contingencies for just about everything.

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. Elliott Berlin. You've tuned into the after-birth episode of a before-and-after birth story. My guest today previously shared her journey through pregnancy and her plans for a home birth, albeit with a few contingency plans for location and providers, depending on the timing of her birth. She's an actress, a musician, and now a brand new mommy. And we'll be joined by her husband, Steven, at some point, Ali Meshaka. Welcome back to the podcast.

ALY MICHALKA: It's good to be back.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: It's amazing to have you back and nobody else can see, but I see a little nugget there.

ALY MICHALKA: Yep.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Sweet little nugget. Oh, wow. All right. So you did it.

ALY MICHALKA: Yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Congratulations.

ALY MICHALKA: Thank you. I'm so glad that everything that I planned for, it just ended up being exactly what I hoped it would be. I know that that's not everybody's story necessarily, but for me, it ended up being just this like divine, amazing experience. And I'm just so grateful. It took a village, you know,

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: let's go back to the plan. Just a little synopsis of what you had planned. You were originally doing standard hospital birth mid pregnancy, shifted gears towards out of hospital birth with midwifery care.

ALY MICHALKA: Yep.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: But you started to record an album very close to the end.

ALY MICHALKA: Yeah, basically my doula Ivy was really the one that kind of raised her hand, thankfully, and was like, uh, I feel like we should have a backup plan just in case maybe you go into labor early. She's like, you probably won't. It's your first pregnancy, but who knows? Maybe you do. We should have a backup plan since you're wanting to make this record out into Panga Canyon, like really close to my guest date. Like we would have been wrapping up the record on like, or we did rap on May 11th and my guest date was like around the 14th. So we were really cutting it close, but I just was confident that we would figure it out and baby would come when baby was supposed to come. And so we had this whole backup plan of like all the baby stuff

ALY MICHALKA: was at our Airbnb in Topanga. We had the birth kit up there, the tub, you know, everything that we would need, basically.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: So you're doing this album, not near your home.

ALY MICHALKA: Correct. I live about two hours from Topanga and AJ, my sister, she lives about an hour from Topanga herself, which isn't ideal anyways, for her to even make the drive, but we just decided, okay, we best, if we had an Airbnb, we'll be in the studio sometimes late at night, I'm pregnant. I'll be uncomfortable. You know, let's just be in a place where we can drive five minutes on the street and get back to sleep and then, you know, wake up the next morning and come to the studio. So that was our plan, but everything kind of just shifted when the plan obviously was interrupted by his plan, which was very different from our plan. Yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: So you had two teams sort of on standby. You had your Topanga team and your home team closer to your house. And it really just was a matter of timing. So, I mean, you're like in your last month of pregnancy.

ALY MICHALKA: Yeah. Yeah, totally.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And did you either start to feel changes or in your visits, did

ALY MICHALKA: people notice things like your body is kind of warming up for a birth? It's interesting that you say that because I think in the moment, no, but I think the one thing that I kind of noticed, but only really after the fact was that my belly was kind of dropping, like it felt different in terms of its shape and firmness and everything in a way that I don't think I was clocking, so that I think was a little bit of a sign. The one big sign for me that last month was like the day after my baby shower, my body was like retaining water, like crazy. Like I was so swollen on my ankles. I just felt like puffy and so uncomfortable. So those last like three weeks, I just was like, Oh my gosh, like, how do I get the swelling down?

ALY MICHALKA: Like it hurts to even like try to bend my foot, you know? So I was kind of trying to do everything possible. Like I was wearing compression socks. I was putting my feet up on the wall. I was like sleeping with like a pillow elevated at night. It was like the acid reflex at that point. I was like, Oh, who cares about that? Now it's like the swelling of my ankles and legs. But yeah, like I tried to kind of be as comfortable as possible. We like outfitted the studio with my big pregnancy pillow and like a comfy chair and plenty of like healthy snacks and stuff that would kind of keep me going and like comfortable clothes. And then literally like two days basically into us starting the record,

ALY MICHALKA: my water broke and I happened to be at my sister's house because I was staying at hers until we checked into the Airbnb, which was supposed to be the next day. So yeah, so that's basically the beginning of the record was initially started and then I had to peace out like immediately.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: So you're at your sister's house and what time of day did your water break?

ALY MICHALKA: So I was on a Friday and it was like very, very early morning Friday, like four AM and I was staying in her guest room with my husband. And our dogs, obviously, you know, we were just all kind of snuggled up in there. And I went to go to the bathroom, which happens multiple times at this stage of pregnancy. And I went to go pee and I noticed when I came back and I crawled into bed, I kind of rolled over and I like started basically like peeing in the bed and I was like, this is really weird. I was like, wow, why am I like peeing my pants right now? I just want to pee. And so I kind of like got out of the bed and I was like, oh no, you're just going to be mad at me that I like peed in her bed.

ALY MICHALKA: But, you know, I'm pregnant, so hopefully forgive me. And then like, as I was walking to go back to the bathroom, I'm like dripping, like leaking all of this like fluid all over her Harbor floor. I'm like, this is really weird. Then I get into the bathroom and I think I'm like, Oh, I need to go pee some more, but it's not really like pee. It feels like it's kind of a different consistency a little bit. And I think when I went to go back into the room, my husband heard me because I'm like splashing all this water on the ground. He's like, is everything okay? I was like, I don't think so. I was like, something is weird. I was like, I can't stop peeing. Like I have no control. And he like, kind of like looked down on the ground.

ALY MICHALKA: He was like, that's a lot of pee. If that is pee. He's like, I don't think that's pee though, babe. He's like, I think that's something else. And I was like, what do you mean? He's like, I think maybe your water broke. He's like, we should call the doula. And I was like, Oh, I was like, I don't think that's what this is, you know, cause nothing looks different, you know,

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: like my wife and I in the escape room.

ALY MICHALKA: Really?

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah.

ALY MICHALKA: Is that a clue?

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I don't think that's cool.

ALY MICHALKA: It seems like a lot of work.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: No, no, that's not a lot of.

ALY MICHALKA: Who's who in that scenario?

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: We'd take turns.

ALY MICHALKA: Okay.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Interesting.

ALY MICHALKA: Okay. So yeah. So basically we call my doula and we like, are taking photos of, you know, what everything looks like and this towel that's like soaked and she's like, well, I think this is really exciting. It seems like this is the very beginning signs that you're in labor. And this is most likely your water breaking. And I'm just like fully in denial. I'm like, um, I have another 17 days of recording, like in my mind, I'm like, this is not happening, but I wasn't like upset. I was just kind of like, huh? I was like, this is so weird. And I'd like, I didn't think it would be this way. And I also thought a, I wouldn't be early and that I'd also be the one like outlier that has their water break, you know, like I was just like, what?

ALY MICHALKA: So we hang up, you know, she told us like, you should just try to get some sleep if you can. So I went to bed and she was like, you know, contractions could start happening soon. It could take hours. So she's like, just try to get as much sleep as possible. And like, we'll reconvene in the morning. So I, at that point go to sleep and I sleep probably about five hours. And then I wake up in the morning and my sister comes in cause she's kind of heard like commotion of us, like talking and whispering. And she's like, uh, is everything okay? And I'm like, um, well, I was like, we think my water broke and like, you know, we fill her in and she's like, what? She's like sitting on the edge of the bed and we're like, you know,

ALY MICHALKA: trying to tell her what's going on. She's like, oh my gosh, this is crazy. And she's like, well, we should pack the car up and like, get you back home, you know, which is what, you know, my birth team, I think ultimately were wanting me to do. And we did do. So I called, cause I basically had two doulas, like one is kind of the daytime doula, you know, if I was going to labor and one is the nighttime doula and they're both wonderful Ivy, Joeva and Mary Skinner, and they work together with me. So now I'm calling Ivy because it's in the morning and Ivy's like, yeah, Mary filled me in. Like, this is really exciting. You know, just take it easy. If you're not feeling like you're in any pain, like I would try to get in

ALY MICHALKA: the car and get on the road as soon as possible so you can kind of avoid being super uncomfortable in a car. I'm like, okay. So I am just hanging out in bed. Like I ordered a smoothie, AJ and her boyfriend and my husband are all like packing up the car with all the birth kit stuff and the dogs and everything. And they're like, we're going to tell you so that we can help you guys unpack and get everything set up at the house. So we get in the car and actually on the way back to my place, we stopped by the studio. I'm like, we have to go back to Topanga. AJ is like, what? I'm like, we have to get the birth ball and like all of Steven's like film cameras are there. And we wanted to, you know, film some of the birth. So like we got to swing by.

ALY MICHALKA: So I like literally swing by. I'm like in like pajamas, like wearing like an adult diaper. And I just am like, hi guys. Like we got to grab some stuff before we roll out of here. And our producer is like awesome. And it was just like, yeah, come on in, no worries. But I was like, you know, who knows? Like this could be a false alarm. Like, you know, we're not a hundred percent sure that it's my water that broke. And I'm sure everybody's looking at me like, yeah, lady, you're pregnant and you're in labor. Like just, you know, admit it. So then we get back on the road and we drive it's about two hours. We get home, everything gets set up. I take a shower at this point. I'm experiencing some very mild contractions in the car.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, that was my question.

ALY MICHALKA: Yeah. They started happening, but it was like very manageable. And I started explaining them as like, they're just really bad cramps. Like I kept saying like cramps over and over again. And we just sitting like regular passenger in the car.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah.

ALY MICHALKA: I had to see it like push back a little bit, but yeah, I was just in the car seat and the dogs were in the back and I was just kind of like, huh, this is interesting. I didn't know it would feel like that, you know, like you don't really know what to prepare for, but I was fine. I was able to like fully have a conversation with my husband in the car. Yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Let me see if I get this right. You're 37 weeks at this point.

ALY MICHALKA: Correct.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Two days into an album and not at home, your water breaks. The team decides it's probably going to be labor. You get into the car, start mildly contracting and go home where you have a birth team, like a midwife and Dula and labor is contingency plans, it's turning out to be the Santa Barbara team rather than the Topanga team, let's take a little break. And when we come back, we'll hear what happens at home. Welcome back. We're talking to Allie Mishaka and the birth story continues. So you get home, get in the shower.

ALY MICHALKA: Yeah. I get in the shower because I'm like, well, you know, who knows how many days it'll be until I maybe shower if this all is really what we think it is still not convinced. Okay. I still plan to not like I'm really truly in denial. And I think it only got confirmed once we did this like test where we did like a swab test fluid. Yeah. And it turned like Navy right away, which was the color of like, yes, this is your water breaking. And then I was like, Oh, okay. Yeah. This is really the real thing. So, yeah, so my sister and her boyfriend, like I said, you know, set everything up and then it was cute. They were kind of like hanging around. Like they didn't really want to leave. I think my sister was kind of like, uh, bye, I love you.

ALY MICHALKA: Almost like the next time she sees me, I'll be a mom or something. It was very interesting. And we're so like connected. You know, I think she was feeling the emotions of it all with me. So later that evening, Steven ended up speaking with our midwife, bless young, who's wonderful. And she was like, I don't think that I'll be able to come over and be a part of this birth because she had just, I guess it was maybe two weeks prior had hip surgery. And we knew about her hip surgery.

We were like, well informed about it. And obviously thinking, okay, I'm not going to give birth for another, maybe two and a half, three weeks that she would be a little bit more mobile by then. We had met her backup midwife, like the midwife who was going

ALY MICHALKA: to be assisting her, her name was Tanya already. And she was like, you know, I think Tanya will be the one that will be there for the delivery. And so she should be the one that comes over and checks you out and checks baby and does like a vital once over on both of you. So she comes over in the night on Friday and you know, Tanya checks us out, everything's good. Baby's heartbeat's great. We did the swap test there with her and everything was confirmed. And then she kind of filled in the rest of the birth team on what was going on and how I was feeling. And then that was kind of it. So basically that night we like ordered in, I think it was like ramen or something and just kind of chilled out and tried to just take

ALY MICHALKA: it easy and we really didn't know like active labor could start soon or it could be like days and everybody kind of kept like reminding us like, this could be slow. This might not be like over right away. So Friday we go to bed at this point. Still I'm having contractions, but they're all very manageable. And at this point too, you know, AJ was back in the studio and she was cutting the band with the producer. So she was like, you know, if you want, you can zoom in and give notes or whatever. And I was like, okay, like I was feeling fine at that point. So I would just be like either laying in bed or on the couch and I'd have like their side on and my screen just like off and I maybe

ALY MICHALKA: have a couple contractions like, you know, within 45 minutes or something. And then next thing it would be like, I'm giving a note or whatever, but it was all so mild. I was fine. And then eventually I think AJ could tell that I kind of had peaced out and wasn't really talking. And she was like, uh, I think maybe things are slightly heating up or maybe like, I don't know. She's gone all of a sudden, you know, and she like texted me and was like, are you okay? And I was like, yeah, yeah. I was like, I'm fine. I was like, I trust you guys that everything is like going well. So I kind of feel like I could just leave the band and you and Jonathan's hands and it's all going to be great. So that's kind of what I did on Friday.

ALY MICHALKA: And then, you know, went to sleep and woke up the next morning and you know, nothing had really massively changed.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Wait. So that's Friday night, early Saturday morning, you start having stronger surges, but then they calmed down overnight.

ALY MICHALKA: Yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Okay. So what happens in the morning? Saturday.

ALY MICHALKA: So then Saturday morning I wake up at this point, I think the contractions have kind of like mellowed and slowed down again, so that's nothing crazy. So I just, I have a breakfast. I kind of do my normal routine. Then you get a call from bliss saying, Hey, you know, heads up. I don't think Tanya will be able to be the backup midwife at this point who would be there when you deliver. She has a hiking trip with her family planned and is it going to be able to be available over the weekend? I think she would have become available like Monday or something. So like, I think my husband on the other end of the phone was going, uh, okay, so what's the plan B? And I didn't freak

out when I was told the news, I was kind of like,

ALY MICHALKA: okay, you know, so Steven kind of fills me in and he's like, another woman is going to be coming over another midwife that we're going to be meeting and her name's Rhonda Perea and she's awesome. You know, it was all meant to be in the end, but Rhonda had never met us. And you know, it was like a last resort of like, okay, well, the backup midwife is now unavailable. So now who else do we go to that's out here in Santa Barbara? And Rhonda came over and checked me on Saturday and was really lovely and was like, I understand what's kind of going on. Bliss gave me the rundown. Like, I just want you to feel comfortable and I know that you don't know me and you've had this birth team with you for these past

ALY MICHALKA: like six months and I was like, no, no, it's okay. Like I really trust that everything's going to be fine. I don't know. I just didn't feel panicked about it. I feel like it's good that this happened to me in a weird way because like with the wrong girl, it probably would have been like an absolute freak out, but we just kind of like, trusted that it would all be fine. And later that afternoon, Ivy visited me, my doula, and, you know, just was kind of like, I just want to be here for like moral support. I know this is probably kind of thrown things for a loop, like having the change up of midwives. And I was like, no, it's fine. I was like, I got three here and one into paying. I was like, we're good.

ALY MICHALKA: So we spent some time with her and we just kind of like relaxed and we talked about the stages of labor just to refresh my brain again and kind of just go over anything that I was concerned about. She really advised a couple of things. She advised that a, I try to get to sleep early as early as I kind of could on Saturday night so that I could get rest for as long as possible. Because she was like, there is a strong chance that you go into labor somewhere in the early hours of Saturday or Sunday. And, you know, my water now at this point has been broken for quite a bit because it broke Friday. She was like, you know, I think you should also try to go outside and like, see the sunset and kind of get your body on like a good rhythm

ALY MICHALKA: with just the planet. And it's funny, we actually have like photos of me that Stephen took of me like in like a big like T-shirt and just like standing outside with like an electrolyte bottle in my hand and then I'm like drinking. Just kind of being like, OK, like, here we go. You know, so that night, this is Saturday now, Saturday evening. Stephen made me like a really great homemade meal. And I was like, we should run like a black and white movie and like just watch something and put the fireplace on and just kind of relax. And I feel like during that movie is when stuff started happening, like where I would kind of like turn away from the screen and have like a contraction and then like come back to watching.

ALY MICHALKA: But it wasn't unbearable, but it was starting to feel more intense. And, you know, we took a hypno birthing class with Alicia Timbury. And my husband was using some of the readings that we did in the class to kind of help relax me because I was having a hard time falling asleep. And I think it's because the contractions were happening and I was anxious. And so he was like reading that to me, which was really nice. And I ended up falling asleep. And then at one a.m., one thirty, something like that, I woke up and was like, this is different. This is like intense now. So I asked my husband if he could time the contractions, which we had done a little bit, but we were not taking it very seriously. We were like, oh, OK, you just had one.

ALY MICHALKA: And then it would be like, you just had one. And it's like 25 minutes later. Now it's like 40 minutes later, you know. So these started being like five, six minutes apart. And we did that for like 45 minutes. And then I was like, I really think we should call Mary. You know, I feel like it's like real. And he was like, OK, let's time two more and see. And of course, the last two that I did were like two minutes apart. They were like really close. And he was like, OK, yeah, I'm going to call Mary.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: So how about the intensity?

ALY MICHALKA: It was pretty intense at that point. Like I was in bed on my side and he was really helping me like breathe through contractions, like in four breaths out eight. And yeah, I was struggling. I couldn't really change my labor positions. It didn't feel very comfortable. And I think part of my discomfort outside of the contractions, just, you know, not being enjoyable was I had at the last like two months, my pregnancy pubic symphysis, which I'm sure was not helping that discomfort of like, I can't really get comfortable and I can't get into position that feels kind of good. So just laying on my left side, I would just like go through the contraction with him. He would breathe with me. And then my legs were like shaking uncontrollably,

ALY MICHALKA: like crazy shaking. It was like they were shaking. And then I would kind of be like holding my legs really tight, like clutching them kind of together. And I think only after the fact that I realized, like, you know, I was probably further along than I even thought, given that that was happening.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Is there anything else in life that you can relate that intensity to something?

ALY MICHALKA: No, it's its own unique. No, it's totally unique. And I feel like I am somebody who does not like overreact about stuff in general, like something that is happening to like your body or whatever. Like I'm pretty tough, but I was definitely thinking, wow, this is something I've never experienced. And this is a lot more intense than I kind of figured it would be, but it was its own unique feeling for sure.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: OK, all right. So the last two are two minutes apart, right? They're getting very close.

ALY MICHALKA: Yeah, correct.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: What do you call?

ALY MICHALKA: We call Mary and Mary is like, great, I'm getting up. I'll be over there in like 45 minutes because she's based in Thousand Oaks. So I kind of knew, OK, then we got to just kind of labor here until she gets here, which is fine. So I think after that call was made, then I went into the bathroom and just sat on the toilet, which was funny because we went through like these might be some positions that will be nice to use or things that you'd like to maybe try. And the toilet was like one of them. But I remember being like in the moment, being like, huh? Like, I'm not going to sit on the toilet. This is weird.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Seems to be oddly comfortable, comfortable.

ALY MICHALKA: Yeah. So, yeah. So I was just on the toilet the whole time. And it's interesting, like at our house, it's like almost like a little like ledge partition where the toilet is. You can't totally see. And I was like gripping onto the side of that and like the window seal kind of and using that as almost like a counter pressure while I was like on the toilet. It was weird. I was like really helping me. Yeah, like all the lights were dimmed. And I think like you lit some candles and just kind of tried to make it as like peaceful as possible. And I think once like you put that on, it was on the whole time until the very end. But yeah, I do remember like Mary coming in and just kind of like swooping in like this, like peaceful, calm angel,

ALY MICHALKA: just taking up this like wonderful space with me. It was funny. It was like my husband was there, like helping me get through everything and being really great and then kind of stepping aside and like letting her come in and like take over, which was really wonderful. Was like this little dance. And she just breathed with me and sat there and like massage my back and like slipped a comb in my hand and put like essential oils on my wrist and my neck. And it was really, really helpful. Like I can't imagine not having had her, you know, the comb to like squeezed like a little distraction. Yeah, for distraction, which I wasn't sure if I was going to use it. They told me that as well, like, oh, if you have like a wooden comb

ALY MICHALKA: or something, which, of course, I set out in the birth kit, but like the birth kits been unpacked, but in like a mayhem kind of way. So she just kind of knew and like, you know, had her own, obviously. And I use that the entire time. I don't think I like let go of that, actually. I think there's like a photo of it like floating in the pool at the end, because I probably let go of it, you know, once the baby was delivered.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: So at this time now, it's at three thirty in the morning, in the morning.

ALY MICHALKA: Yeah. So, yeah. So she's just helping me through everything. And I just remember feeling in some of those moments, like everything was so dim and like amber lights and everything. I just kind of like this feels so intense. And I really hope that I can just push through this and that I'll be able to deliver at home. Like I was very much fixated on like nothing to prove anything to anyone or myself. But I was like, I really want to know that I did this and I didn't say I need to transfer. And then like we're in the car now and we're transferring to the hospital down the street just because maybe I got tired or something, which like I understand, you know, why that ends up happening. But I just was really like, I want to do this

ALY MICHALKA: and I need to just power through it. But feeling that like felt like hellish almost being like, how much longer will this be? And it wasn't even like it had been happening for that long, you know, active labor. But I just remember feeling like very overwhelmed, but also very calm, not scared at all. And felt very taken care of by Mary's energy and Stephen and them like bringing in like, you know, water for me to drink. And when I would feel nauseous, they would like bring a trash can and I would think, oh, I'm going to throw up. And then I didn't like it went really as smoothly as it could. And then, you know, we got to a point where I'm sitting the opposite way on the toilet with like my arms kind of, you know, over the top of it.

ALY MICHALKA: And Mary's, you know, asking me, how are you doing? I'm not really talking that much. I'm like, I'm definitely having very, very small conversations, probably in like very little words,

almost nothing. The one time I life that I was silent and she's like, are you feeling any rectal pressure? And I was like, yeah, major. And at this point, I think I had gone number two, like multiple times, but I was definitely feeling that. And I think at that point, that's when she knew like, OK, stuff is like progressing and I'm going to give Ronda a call now to come over. So then Ronda shows up quite soon because she doesn't live very far. She's like 15 minutes away with her wonderful assistant.

ALY MICHALKA: And they start setting up the tub out in the living room where our fireplace is. And Stephen's like helping and trying to like hook up the nozzle to the shower and the guest bathroom. And like, you know, I can hear them like shuffling around out there, but I'm just like kind of breathing and like, you know, working through my contractions with Mary. And then I get to a point, I think, where I'm like tired out on the toilet. And when I see like at this point, too, like I'm kind of spotting, like there's a little bit of blood that's like getting on like my bathroom rug. And the fact that I didn't even really care about that, that says a lot because I'm very OCD and like everything has to be like clean and in its place.

ALY MICHALKA: And I was just saying, well, whatever, if the rug ruined, it's ruined, you know. And I'm like, is the bathtub ready? And she's like, I don't know. Let me see. I'm going to go check. And I'm just kind of like, I really need the bathtub to be ready because I need to get in there, because at that point, I think I just needed some new relief, you know. And it was like half filled, I think, at this point.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, take a minute.

ALY MICHALKA: Exactly. Exactly. I was like, guys, come on, let's get this going. So, you know, they had me get in, even though it's not fully filled up, which they were like, it's fine. Like, it'll finish filling. But I get in and it's like really hot because it hasn't fully cooled off from like the hot water running out and cooling off the tub inside. So I'm like getting in. It felt like I was in a jacuzzi. And I was just like already sweating from like laboring. And I was saying, I'm so hot. Like, can we make this colder? And, you know, they're kind of like putting some cold water in the tub a little bit. Like, it can't get cold because it can't be cold for the baby. So I'm just like draped over the tub being like, this is too hot now, you know.

ALY MICHALKA: And so then they come and like bring me some Gatorade and like wet towels. And they're kind of like putting it on my forehead. And I'm pretty wiped, you know. But again, like, I haven't really been an active labor that long. But I think it's just everything has progressed really fast in a very short window. And I feel like now that I've gotten in the tub, things have also kind of changed as well.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: How do you mean?

ALY MICHALKA: I guess when I got in there, I started feeling like I was maybe ready to like push or that the baby was like close. And I asked Rhonda, like, is everything OK? Am I doing this right? She's like, yeah, you're doing great. And I'm like, can I start pushing? And she was like, she's like, well, let's see. You know, reach down there and put your finger inside and see if you can feel his head. Well, also, because Ali's water have been broken for so many hours. They didn't want to do any examination. So we didn't know how dilated she was at any point in the process. Which usually, you know, you're going to be getting some updates, which in a way maybe was good, because then I wasn't like obsessing over

ALY MICHALKA: like if you're four centimeters and I'd be like, really? Like, I wish I was further along. So that was actually kind of nice. There was this period from when Mary came until he was born. That window is maybe like three or four hours. But it was like the most beautiful thing I've ever witnessed that Mary and Ali just became like their own wavelength, their own energy. They became like part of this world that I was sort of suddenly on the outside of, but in like this beautiful way that was so incredible to watch and that just like so grateful to Mary. She was incredible. And I think because of how pure that space was for them and there was no person other than Mary coming in to check anything

ALY MICHALKA: is part of why it went so quickly, because you were just like in the zone and stayed there. Yeah, there was no interruptions. And I was just breathing and moaning through every search. You know, I mean, I think it helped. I was explaining this after the fact that like watching a lot of home births was really good for me because I saw what was normalized in those videos and was like, oh, I can do that, you know, in my home space and feel comfortable doing that and not feeling like judged or whatever. Oh, that's cool that they gave you like a visual. Yeah, gave me a visual. Well, we saw one where the couple were in bed like 30 minutes, an hour after giving birth. And the husband had like brought her soup. And I was like, I want to do that.

ALY MICHALKA: Yeah, it was cute. He was like, I want to make you soup in bed. It's like it seems so civilized that they're like already in their home space and he's cooking for her from their own kitchen and they're in their bed. And the child's first experience is like being in this room that they're going to be in all the time. It is incredibly cool. Yeah. And then after he was born, I was like insisting on making soup. And he was like, you don't need to do that. Like, we'll do it for you. And I was like, no, I need to make. They were like, why is he so obsessed with making soup? It was your dream that you needed to have.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah. Now that we took a little pause, let's take a break. And when I come back, we're going to get the rest of the story. We'll be right back. Welcome back. We have the family of three here on the podcast, sharing the final bits of this birth story. So your midwife comes over, plain sea midwife and midwife assistant and your doula's there and Steven's there. And things are picking up. So she says, reach inside.

ALY MICHALKA: Yeah. And just feel and see how deep basically your finger goes. And I like, you know, reach down. It's interesting we have it on camera, actually, because did you set up a camera at that point? Yeah. Well, yeah, I really wanted to be present. So I just put a camera on a table and hit record and hope for the best. But I asked Rhonda at this point when she gets in the tub, like ballpark, how far away are we? And she was like, well, for a first time, mom, it could be two hours, could be four, could be six. You know, there's really no way to predict, but it ended up being like so much faster than that. So I sort of caught off guard. But that's the reason that we have it on camera is that it all went fast.

ALY MICHALKA: Right when I started recording is when Ali reaches in and she holds up her finger and it's like just the first knuckle. Yeah, it's like, yeah, exactly. Oh, wow. First knuckle. And she's like, OK. And you're just literally here, Rhonda, go, OK, we're ready to push. It was almost like a line in a movie. She's so calm. She's so calm and like wonderful. And yeah, the exact energy that you want in

a midwife. So at that point, I'm like, let's go, let's do this. So, you know, I start pushing and I start being like quite vocal at first. I would say it felt to me like I was like really exerting a lot of sound. And then I think I would take like a break or whatever, you know, kind of wait for the wave to kind of subside and then would push again.

ALY MICHALKA: And she was walking me a little bit through it, like, you know, when the contraction starts, that's when you can start pushing. I'm like, OK, so when a contraction happens is when I push it. I want to make sure I was getting it right, you know? And she's like, yeah. And then she was like, you know, if you start to feel, you know, any kind of burning during that contraction, she's just kind of breathe rapid breaths out. So I'm like checking in like like this. You know, I'm just like wanting like the feedback. And she's like, yeah, we're doing great. Like, that's exactly it. So I'm doing that, you know, for a good, you know, 25 minutes. And then I feel like we get to a place. It's now like six thirty five or something a.m.

ALY MICHALKA: The sun, it's not up, but the sky is kind of blue. Yeah, we have these big windows in our front living room. Yeah, the sun hadn't risen yet. And you could hear the birds were all awake. And I'll never forget a whole time she was in labor playing this meditation that we found in New Zealand at a hotel that was kind of like centered around the idea of longevity. And it was a recording that's supposed to take you to a meditative state just by listening to it. And it has three sections and it's about two hours long. So when it loops, you don't really feel the loop. But right at this moment, the score shifted in a way that seemed like it couldn't possibly be real. But when we listen back to it, it was exactly as

ALY MICHALKA: now it was like a couple of pushes away. The score changed like it was a cube. I like played it for my sister and she was like, wait, that just shifted. And I was like, I know, I know that's just the track that's like been going on for hours endlessly. She's like, this is insane. But it was very much like this kind of like spiritual moment of him like coming into the world. And I basically remember like taking a beat and doing one. Like I just kind of bared down and I pushed and his head popped out, which obviously I felt. And Rhonda saw she was like, OK, his head's out. Like the next push will just be his body and you got it. Like you just take your time. And then the next contraction happened and I bared down again.

ALY MICHALKA: And then I just felt like it was such a strange. I don't know how to describe it, but it's like I was trying to tell Stephen. It's like you're just feeling like shoulders, waist, hip, but legs, feet like it's all like just this like little squish of, you know, bones that just kind of slips out. And it was so wild. And I just kind of reached down and I grabbed him and picked him up through the water.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: At that point, you didn't know he was a him.

ALY MICHALKA: I didn't know it was a him. Yeah, I'm saying him now because obviously I know. But like, yeah, at this point, I wasn't even looking for like, what's the sex like? I just was like, oh, my gosh, I'm just like, you know, out of it. Like, I get why they say that there's like a high and this adrenaline rush that you get, which is true. And I feel like I had that whole high for the rest of the entire day. Like I was wired. Even though I was exhausted, I like couldn't go to sleep until late at night. I went to bed. You crash because I think you were like being my rock. So you were kind of like, I need to, you know, like, well, after making the soup and after making the soup. So it's exhausting.

ALY MICHALKA: But yeah, like, you know, Stephen, like comes around to the tub and we're both like crying and I'm just like, I'm thanking everybody. And it was incredible. Ali caught him and brought him up because she had been on all fours facing me. So it brought him up like in the direction that I was already happened to be. So I saw him just rise through the water in her hands. And he came up and right when he left the surface of the water, immediately cried. Yeah. But this like very, really soft, not scary. It was kind of like, I'm here, but like, I'm calm. Yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: You're bringing back memories of my son and born at home in our tub. And same thing. My wife also was on all fours turned around. I think the midwife passed the baby like through to her on the other side. And I watched her bring him up through the water to the surface. And I could see the first breath clearly. The lungs inflate and I have no face recognition at all. I can't picture anyone's faces, but it's almost like that. One second of time is etched into my mind in a way that I could see it and never forget it. That is cool. I didn't think to make soup. That's OK. That's OK. No judge. No judgments. It saves me.

ALY MICHALKA: It was the last one. I can't even.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Wow. When he was passing through you, was that sensation intense?

ALY MICHALKA: Yeah. It's funny, the whole time that I was laboring, I didn't like look down at my stomach because my mom was like asking. She was like, did you see like, you know, how your stomach is like rolling with the waves? I was like, no, I never looked down. I was like, that's so funny. I just was so in it, like in my own body. I was like, I don't need to see what's, I guess, going on down there. But yeah, it felt intense. Yeah, you were so in it that she didn't even clock that they were having trouble finding a heartbeat. Right. Right. It was because he was so low that they weren't really sure where he was accurately enough. And so they took a couple of readings and eventually got one.

ALY MICHALKA: But you got like I could read their faces that they were very concerned. And there was a moment.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: You're saying right before he came out.

ALY MICHALKA: Yeah. And then right before he did come out and they found the heartbeat. I realized how worried they were by how much relief was on their face when everything was fine. But then there was like this beautiful surge. I felt between that moment of knowing that they're fine. They just need to finish this dance that they're and then him being born. I was like so relieved, but Ali didn't notice any of it. She was just in the moment. Another world in a trance. Get him out. And, you know, in my mind, I'm thinking, OK, I haven't done any of these like stretching, you know, massages yet because I was going to start them that week, basically. And, you know, I've been doing like, you know, everything else to like prep.

ALY MICHALKA: But like I, you know, was just starting to eat dates and was just going to start having raspberry leaf tea, you know, all these things that would be loosening that area and whatever, you know. And I remember thinking in my mind, like, I didn't have any concept of time, so I don't think I knew exactly like this is how many hours I've been in active labor, which in hindsight now, I'm like, that's insanely sure. But I was like, I really need to like listen to what Rhonda's saying with my breath work and like not trying to rush because I don't want to tear. And I know that like part of this is like

trying to open that area in a way that's like, you know, it's extending over a period of time. It's not just like rushing through it,

ALY MICHALKA: which ultimately I did end up doing. And I did have a tear, which was fine. But I remember even thinking like when he came through, I was like, I probably teared. I'm pretty sure you felt it really fast.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Well, when did you realize he was a boy?

ALY MICHALKA: So, you know, we pulled him up to my chest and Stephen like kind of was like beside me. And we were just like looking down. Well, it's important to note that the team had told us we're not going to talk. Oh, yeah. Because we want your voices to be the only ones he hears at first. We knew that they were just going to kind of back away. Let us be alone. So then I think, you know, it was just us kind of like staring in awe, you know, like us having just accomplished this. And, you know, the team having helped us get here. And Ali was thanking everyone. I was like thanking everybody by name. Just. Yeah. I was like, thank you, Roland. Thank you, Mary. I hadn't even gotten the name of the assistant assistant.

ALY MICHALKA: I was like, I had only been in the house for like 25. Yeah, like it was just insane. And then Mary was like, have you looked at what you guys had? And I was like, oh, my gosh, no. And it had been like minutes at this point. And I looked down, I was like, it's a boy. And then she was like, it's a boy. And I was like, so excited. And her like response on the other end of the camera is really sweet because we have her side of the footage of like iPhone camera angle. And yeah, we just kind of sat there and we just were just in awe. And then, you know, Rhonda came over and was like, you know, when you're ready, we need you to deliver the placenta. So we just want you to kind of relax and you can deliver it yourself

ALY MICHALKA: if you want, you can, you know, tug a little bit on the cord. And so then I just kind of sat there and I was like, so I just kind of pushed to which is like, yeah, I just pushed. And then it just kind of came out and I tugged a little bit on the cord. And then we put in a bowl and it was like floating in a bowl inside the birth tub. I was probably in there for like a good half hour. And then we got me into the bed and the baby, you know, was obviously in our arms and they just left us alone for. Yeah. Like it felt like it could have been an hour. Yeah. Of just skin to skin. Ali had him and they said, you know, whenever you want, we can do the next steps, but there's no rush. That time was like so incredible.

ALY MICHALKA: And I'm convinced that his calmness is connected to that. How he entered the world. And then when we went back to the studio, he was just so calm. And I don't know, I think there's a connection. It's a very, very, very beautiful, peaceful way to transition from that womb world into this outside world.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: So we were both wrong about the prediction of gender. You're both wrong.

ALY MICHALKA: Yes, we both.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Well, I was partially wrong. And you were totally wrong. We both said, girl, but I said, I'm usually wrong. I'm usually wrong. So it's probably a boy. Yeah. But I kept up my

tradition of being wrong. And then we made predictions on weight. How much did he weigh?

ALY MICHALKA: He was six pounds, 10 ounces.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: You were closer than me. Yeah. I said seven pounds and seven and I said seven point two.

ALY MICHALKA: But I wasn't expecting him to come that early.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And we also were totally wrong about the dates.

ALY MICHALKA: Yeah, they did. You're right. They said he could have been, you know, on the larger side if he had cooked in there for another, you know, couple of weeks. Yeah, another pounder. I was like, we don't need him to have been any larger out of my body.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: This is just fine.

ALY MICHALKA: And then we thought, you know, middle of May. Yeah. And he was April 21st. Yeah, he came early. It was like a little Aries Taurus cusp baby, which made my sister very happy because both me and her Aries. So she was like excited. Like, yes, he's a Taurus, but she's like, but he's kind of Aries, too.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah, I'm a Taurus. I'll take him. It's fine. How was postpartum for you and breastfeeding and recovery?

ALY MICHALKA: Breastfeeding was pretty great off the bat. He only ended up latching to one side at first, and then I didn't push it. And I was just like, he doesn't seem like he's really hungry. But I remember like that feeling of him first latching. I was like, whoa, this is like a vacuum. This is crazy. And then we kind of really got the hang of it. And he was like a good little eater off the bat. You know, I had my placenta turned into pills, so I've been taking those every day. And I think that that's definitely helped my recovery. Also helped you. Oh, yeah. Yeah, I did have a small hemorrhage. Rhonda told me kind of after the fact, which, you know, I wasn't worried. But like laying in my bed, you know, she like was stitching me up

ALY MICHALKA: because of the tear, and then she was like really taking her time. And then we kind of noticed that, like, my bleeding hadn't totally stopped in a way that it probably should have kind of. She's like, yeah, you're still bleeding quite a bit. And she was like, OK. And then she was kind of feeling my stomach and she's like, everything feels fine. But she's I just want to kind of monitor you a little bit. So she's like, just, you know, stay in bed. Like, I'll come check you in like another like 30 minutes. And, you know, she came in and was like, you know, maybe we get you to the bathroom. I want to make sure that you go pee before I leave. So I got up to go and everybody was kind of like, you know, they were around me, but like in my doorway,

ALY MICHALKA: Stephen said that my eyes like rolled in the back of my head because I was just faint, you know, and like almost fell over and everybody like kind of grabbed me and like put a chair under me. I was like, OK, never mind. You're not going to pee right now. We're going to put you back in the bed. I think you just lost a lot of blood in your week, you know. But then, like really soon after that, they gave me some raw placenta.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah, that's what I was wondering.

ALY MICHALKA: Yeah. You know, because Ivy ended up actually. It was really beautiful. So Mary had another birth that she needed to be at. So after I delivered, she left within like five minutes. And then Ivy came in and relieved her and was there for everything after which and when we saw her on Saturday, we told her the next time you see us, we're going to have him in our arms. And she came in right after him and literally like it was kind of crazy. She's like, you predicted this. So she was like, we're going to get you some raw placenta right now. She's like, I'm getting it in the kitchen. Like, don't worry. It's going to help with the bleeding.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And they just say it was smoothie or juice.

ALY MICHALKA: No, they literally just gave you pieces. The first few pieces were just raw. Like, I literally just like chucked it down to me. OK, yeah, exactly. Yeah, it was a total sashimi moment.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: What it tastes like.

ALY MICHALKA: It just tasted like raw meat, like almost like liver. Something, you know, OK, it wasn't bad. I think I also was just like, whatever I need to do to help make this all heal well, like I'll do it.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Are you an adventurous eater in general?

ALY MICHALKA: I am, yes. OK, fine. And then they made like a smoothie for me and we had Steven soup and everything, so I was set. But then, yeah, the bleeding ended up stopping and I was able to go pee. Everybody, you know, checked me out. And, you know, obviously, at this point, we had weighed the baby and measured him and everything. And then we did a really beautiful ceremony of burning the umbilical cord instead of cutting it. So we had these two candlesticks, which we were like tearing the house apart to find these candlesticks. And I was like, just use the candlesticks that are like in candle holders. We have we never found them. And then it turned out they were in Topanga. Yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, OK.

ALY MICHALKA: So anyway, so we use like our own candlesticks that were in the house. We had like two candlesticks, funny enough, in here. And we just sat on the bed and it burned down. And it was really beautiful. And Bixby was like on the bed, like sniffing that, you know, he was like, what is this? You know, I was like, no, no, no, no, no. Your mom needs this stable. Stay away. But he was being really sweet with the baby and like was very curious. And then everybody kind of, you know, slowly kind of packed up. And Ivy was like the last one to be with us. And it was just a great way to kind of end this whole thing. And then over the next like day or two, I had some really large blood clots that I passed that I was like, whoa, wow, that's crazy.

ALY MICHALKA: So then I was like kind of feeling good about like the bleeding at that point. And I was just sore and felt very like, you know, the stitches just felt tight, like I was like, whoa, I hope this doesn't feel like this forever. I mean, obviously it didn't and it doesn't. But I was just like tender getting in and out of bed and still like leaking. So I had to wear, you know, I mean, I'm still in diapers right

now. I'm kind of loving them. They're great.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: You don't want to give them up.

ALY MICHALKA: And I just wear them forever now. But yeah, then, you know, we just took the next week to just be fully immersed in our little bubble with him and with Bixby. And Stephen was like cooking her 40 days cookbook. And I would just sleep like a bunch of hours and nap when he was napping and we'd like FaceTime family members and friends and just taking a bunch of photos of him. And then like it came to a point where I was like, OK, I feel good. Like, let's go to Topanga. You know, and my sister's like, Al, you don't have to do this if you don't want to. And I was like, no, I know. But I was like, we have this Airbnb that's here for another two weeks. I've already missed out on a week of all the band stuff getting cut,

ALY MICHALKA: which I love. It's like some of my favorite stuff to see created, which is a bummer I missed out, but it's OK. And she was like, OK. She's like, I mean, we'll have everything as set up here as possible and we'll just be helping. And, you know, we can go to the studio late in the day. It doesn't have to be like a long day and you just take it as you need to. So then we left on Saturday. So it wasn't even really technically a week because he was born on a Sunday. And we got out there and, you know, Stephen just busted his ass, like unpacking everything and getting all the items out to feel like our home, you know, like our pillows and all of his baby things that we needed and have brought.

ALY MICHALKA: We had like fresh flowers out and, you know, a stocked fridge. And then Sunday, I just relaxed in Topanga and just took it slow and took it really easy. And then Monday was our first day back in the studio. And we just brought him. He was just chilling with us. We started our days around three o'clock and we would go to like about two or three. Yeah, like we started two or three and then we go to like nine or ten. And he was just a total trooper. And AJ became obsessed with him. It was funny, like at the end, when we wrapped everything up, she was like, well, I'm not going to see him every day like I was seeing him. They give to somebody photos now every single day of him. We kind of created a new bubble.

ALY MICHALKA: Yeah. And if it was a film set or something, it wouldn't have been possible. Or if you physically were in a different place, it wouldn't have been possible. But, you know, other than cutting vocals, you were able to be with him. And we just tried to create a new Topanga bubble. And Topanga is already kind of this idyllic place. So it felt really natural. And the producer is so kind, Jonathan. And he had a yard with a bed where we could go if we needed time alone. Yeah, it was like perfectly set up.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah, it was kind of sounds very Topanga.

ALY MICHALKA: Yeah, it was. And everybody was like just very helpful. And Stephen and AJ's boyfriend, Josh, would kind of like split cooking meals. So like Stephen kind of cooked meals for that first week that we were there. And then Josh kind of was doing like, you know, stews and stuff that was nice and comforting at night for dinner. There's an amazing grocery store there called Canyon Gourmet. And we were just sourcing things from there.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I cannot wait to hear this music. It's really special. What an interesting time to be creating. All right. A few more questions. What's the origin of his name?

ALY MICHALKA: So Jack is my mom's father's name. Who's no longer with us, but we were very close with him growing up. And he was really like our favorite grandparent, truly. And he just had this wonderful demeanor and disposition about him, very calm, very kind, really patient. And I've just always loved the name Jack. And I thought it would be really nice if it was a family name. And we didn't have like a huge long list. You know, we had a list of names for girls and we only had maybe like one other boy name set aside. But I always kind of knew if we do have a boy, it'll be Jack. And then his middle name, Francis, is a name that's on Stephen's side of the family, which I think is really great. And I wanted to honor some filmmakers.

ALY MICHALKA: So it was a way to kind of honor Francois Truffaut and Francis Ford Coppola, but also St. Francis and my godmother's name is Francis. So there are just so many reasons that it felt like a great middle name.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Mm hmm. Oh, sweet. Is it the nicknames?

ALY MICHALKA: We call him this. You're going to be like, what? It's from a Tim Robinson skit. So listeners, if you know Tim Robinson, you'll understand this. If you're listening and you don't know this, you're like, huh? But we call him a little buff boy because it's from a skit that Tim Robinson does about all these like little kids in a pageant being buff. But we joke that he's a little buff boy because he's got like little muscles. Oh, so yeah, we call him a little young.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah. OK. Last thing that I have in my mind is postpartum is hard for a lot of people. A lot of people get different kinds of P meds, perinatal mood and anxiety disorders. And you've had some challenges in the past, right? With that, was it a concern for you moving into postpartum? And is there anything that you did to sort of take care for it either during the pregnancy or afterwards?

ALY MICHALKA: Yeah, it's interesting. I think I feel like I really prepared for the birth. Like, I feel like I equip myself with as much knowledge and as many tools as possible from like taking a hypnobirthing class, from doing physical therapy, PT work when the pubic synthesis hit to doing Pilates up until a point where it started to feel uncomfortable to, you know, hydrating and drinking at least 75 ounces of water a day and 75 grams of protein plus a day and, you know, getting as much sleep as possible and stretching like literally without being like a maniac. I really was like, I need to take this seriously and do this so that my body has the best chance of having a good delivery, a safe delivery and that the healing process of everything at the end,

ALY MICHALKA: you know, is also like successful. And I feel like a couple of things that really helped me was A, choosing like a great partner who like totally stepped up and like helped me like an angel throughout all of these months and like really doted on me, which I know not everybody necessarily has or maybe even has the opportunity to be able to be doted in that way. But like our work gave us that opportunity to not have you be away like nine to five job, you know, type of thing. So that was really wonderful. And then I think the home birth was like a game changer. I have very strong feelings now about home births, and I feel like I have my own personal crusade to go on to try to get

ALY MICHALKA: as many people doing home births as possible, you know, without pressuring them. And then I think third of all, a huge one was staying on antidepressants, which was like very talked about with my birth team. And it has been something that's, I know, very widely discussed in just the medical space and online and everything. You know, there's a lot of opinions about like, you need to be on nothing. This is really dangerous and blah, blah, blah. And then just people's opinions about antidepressants in general. But I've been very open with my fan base about when I got on antidepressants, which was at a quite young age, I was about 14 and a half, 15. And I knew that that was something that was going to help

ALY MICHALKA: get me through the pregnancy where I could function and not have this like depression kind of take over and paralyze me in my day to day life. And then I was able to work with like a really wonderful psychiatrist who works specifically with women who are trying to get pregnant or are currently pregnant or postpartum. And she just worded it in a really beautiful way. You should say the way that she worded it, because it was botched. No, you know. No, no, no. Go, go, go. I think the basic idea is that a mom who feels stable and healthy and present is so much more valuable than whatever small risk might exist from taking something that benefits far away at the risk. Yeah. And then we know that having a destabilized mom

ALY MICHALKA: has negative impacts for the child, undoubtedly. And it's been studied and it's clear. So getting you to a stable place is priority one. And then everything else falls. And she really made me not have like a shame about getting on medication. Because long story short, I got off of medication thinking, you know, I need to get on to maybe a safer medication that is like deemed one of these like it's been approved that you can be on this and it's antidepressant. And then when I did that, I had some really strange side effects from that. And the only way that I was able to kind of pinpoint what was going on was by getting off of it all together to make sure like I wasn't losing my mind and going crazy.

ALY MICHALKA: I was like, I know this is the side of facts you were newly experiencing were connected to this new medication. And they were. And I kept just feeling like I knew in my gut that it was. And I needed to just get off of that drug altogether. And then everything kind of shifted. But when I was off of it, I was off of medication for a couple of months. And it was really, really hard. Like it was not good. And I think Stephen was very concerned about my well-being. And this was before, you know, I ended up even getting pregnant. But I think once I met this psychiatrist and we kind of sat down and talked, she was like, what you've been on for years, obviously, is working for you. And I think that you should be going back on it.

ALY MICHALKA: You know, we kind of came to this like hallelujah moment of like, OK, maybe I'm just supposed to be on this medication that I've been on since, you know, over the last 10 years, because I've kind of tried them all. I'm like the poster child for all antidepressants. And I like almost immediately fell back to myself. Like I felt normal almost instantly. And then I ended up getting pregnant literally a month later. I think being back on medication. Yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: You know, everything we do is a risk benefit analysis and nothing's risk free. And that includes not taking your medication is definitely not risk free. And so the medications, my wife is a psychologist. We work with psychiatrists also who specialize in pregnancy specifically in

postpartum and the medications have come a long way. And we learned that not taking the medication can sometimes be far riskier than taking it. And so there is a lot of shame, though. And so I'm really grateful that you speak about it openly in general and now in terms of pregnancy and postpartum, because there shouldn't be shame and stigma around it. And only by talking about it can we make progress on that.

ALY MICHALKA: I mean, I feel like, you know, it's not the only thing that's obviously going to help me get through the day. But it's something that I very much see a difference in my mind, in my spirit and how I socialize. And I think, you know, you would never really ever see me in a moment of crisis like that before. So I think it also was kind of proof to you, not that you've never been like a believer, that it's something that helps me. But I think you saw firsthand how important it was for me to continue being on a medication throughout my pregnancy. And I'm glad I just kind of stuck with it. And I'm sure, you know, people will have their opinions and that's OK. But yeah, it's nice that it's something that is being more and more talked about,

ALY MICHALKA: because I think it's a big topic that is not spoken about.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah, I mean, I generally think it's an important discussion to have with the right doctor and to make the decision together and have no shame in that decision at all. And for you, it's the postpartum has been good from a mental health perspective.

ALY MICHALKA: I think that creating music while doing this has actually been like a plus. And I think it's because it's feeding that, like, create a part of my mind. It's also keeping a bit of like the version of me before baby, you know, alive. And it's like feeding that part of myself that has always been there, that, you know, loves making records and loves making music. And so I think that that's been like just the right kind of distraction from like, you know, baby is with us 24 seven. And like, obviously, he's the priority. But we're also like not going to totally stop our life for him, too. Like, we want him to be a great traveler and to be on adventures with us and be on a tour bus. So this is just like his intro into the world.

ALY MICHALKA: It's very us, which I think is kind of cool. And it's cool that we could experience our little bubble in our own home, which we're now back in. So we're kind of creating that bubble again. And then we had that with my sister and her being able to be included. I think it was really special for her to be a part of. And the fact that we have this kind of timestamp on this album you know, we started making the record as in writing the record around when I conceived, like maybe a month or so before I conceived. So it's been this like full circle moment of like, you know, in utero we were creating and writing music and prepping the album. And now he's out and we're doing it still.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, I hope he doesn't feel too much pressure to have a baby for the next album.

ALY MICHALKA: Yeah, exactly.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: She said, Oh, no marketing on that one. OK, you guys are amazing. And again, thank you so much for sharing your story. I'm grateful that somehow two hours away from you, the universe, you know, connected us and I got to work with you and be inspired by you in a million different ways. And I'm so grateful for you that you had such a beautiful birth experience that you're

now a home birth advocate. I always tell people.

ALY MICHALKA: I'm a crusader now for home births.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, crusader. I always tell people give birth where you feel most comfortable.

ALY MICHALKA: Yeah, oh, you're right.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Explore all the options and give birth where you feel most comfortable. In your case, it just wasn't an option that had been explored yet.

ALY MICHALKA: I think it just had to do with education, really, for me. And for someone else, they might do the education and the, you know, going down the rabbit hole and say, I still don't. This still doesn't feel right for me. And I think that that's totally their prerogative. But I was just glad that I did it this way, you know.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah, it's interesting. During Covid, we saw a lot of people give birth out of the hospital who would have otherwise given birth in the hospital. And for some of them, you could be like, wow, thank goodness for Covid, I had the best birth experience and I never would have explored that option had it not been for the virus. And other people, you could tell they didn't want to give birth in the hospital because of Covid, but they really didn't feel comfortable giving birth at home either. And for them, it was the lesser of two evils. And, you know, even when the outcome is good, the experience might have been better at a hospital birth. It's just everybody has their place. So congratulations to you and Ali, Steven and little buff boy.

ALY MICHALKA: Thank you, sir. Thanks. Yeah, you'll see me. I'll be back in for my adjustments and he'll be in tow.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Looking forward.

ALY MICHALKA: You know, who knows? Maybe there's a second one. It went great this first time.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: So, yeah, I'm already preparing the podcast for the next story. Perfect. Perfect. Ali, one more time. Where can we find you online?

ALY MICHALKA: You can find me on Instagram at I am Ali and also at Ali and AJ. If you want to listen to my music, you can go on Spotify or Tidal, Apple, however you listen. I recommend listening to the record on vinyl if you can.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: You know what? You said that last time and I haven't done it. I'm becoming a fan. Well, then you have a record player at home. I will get a record player for this purpose. But I'm becoming a fan of your guys' music. It's creative and you've got humor built in there that I can relate to. But some great music that I don't know. I just don't listen to music very often. So I don't know if I ever would have found it.

ALY MICHALKA: Oh, well, I'm glad that we've got a new listener and a new, you know,

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: concert attendee as well. Oh, absolutely. Front row. I can't wait. And especially for this album and tour, knowing everything that went into it. All right. I am Elliott and at home. Thanks for listening to the informed pregnancy podcast. For more pregnancy and parenting information, visit us online at informed pregnancy dot com.

Enjoying the Informed Pregnancy Podcast?

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

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