From Addiction to Motherhood

Episode 415 · July 11, 2024 · with Jessica

IN THIS EPISODE

Jessica works in addiction treatment leadership — and she has lived the journey herself. She shares with Dr. Elliot Berlin, DC her path from addiction to recovery to motherhood, and how that story shapes the work she does today.

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DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Welcome to the Informed Pregnancy and Parenting Podcast. I'm your host, pregnancy-focused chiropractor, Dr. Elliot Perlain. My guest today works in the mental health and addiction field in a leadership role at an outpatient clinic. She's also a mother of two, and she'll share her journey from addiction to recovery to motherhood. Jessica, welcome to the podcast.

JESSICA: Hi. Good morning. How are you?

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I'm doing great. Thank you very much. Thank you for joining me. There's a lot to talk about here. Your story's interesting and inspiring. Let's jump in at the beginning. Where are you from?

JESSICA: I'm from Los Angeles, California, born and raised. My parents are from Belarus. They moved here pregnant with me, so I'm first generation.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Welcome.

JESSICA: Thank you.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I talked a little bit in the opening about what you do for work. Tell me more about the work that you do.

JESSICA: I work as a director of operations at an intensive outpatient, primarily for substance abuse and mental health, and we treat patients from all over America that struggle with mental health and substance abuse.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: All over America, meaning of different locations or virtual, or they come to you?

JESSICA: They come to us, so they're usually from out of state.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Okay. And how did you get into that work?

JESSICA: I'm actually in recovery myself.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And what are you recovering from?

JESSICA: If you want to get the details, you know, from heroin and meth.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Heroin and meth.

JESSICA: Yep. And I actually just celebrated eight years on Thursday.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, wow. Congratulations. Yeah. I mean, clearly your life has turned around in a tremendous way, which is just inspiring to know that it's possible.

JESSICA: Yeah. I mean, it's a complete 180. I'm not the same Jessica that I was back then at all.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And you're still pretty young. So how did Jessica 180 ago get started?

JESSICA: As in to this path of recovery?

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Before the path of recovery, how did you get onto the path of addiction?

JESSICA: So, you know, I was always a girl that felt like she needed to be loved and accepted, and I never felt that in my mind. I never felt like I belonged, and I feel like, you know, from trauma. I grew up in LA, and I'm a young girl, and I grew up really quickly, right? I went to clubs at 16, hung out with the wrong people. Now, looking back, it was all because I wanted to feel like I belonged and like I fit in. So I went with the wrong crowd, right? At 17, I got raped, and I was introduced to a substance, and that was the first time that I felt warm, and I felt safe, and I felt like I was okay.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Wow. I don't even know what to say, really, but let me put on my parenting hat, because you're a parent now, I'm a parent, I have teenagers.

JESSICA: Yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: What do you say to parents in general, and parents of teenagers who are seemingly one of our worst nightmares, and for it to be as simple as going with the wrong crowd?

JESSICA: So I don't know if it was the way that I grew up had played a factor in it, but what I do know that as a parent that I try to do everything differently than how I was raised, in a sense, I want my children to know and truly feel in their heart that they are loved. I don't know if it's because I come from a Soviet family that I just never felt it, and maybe I was a little bit more sensitive, that I want my daughter to know that she's loved. I want my son to know that he's loved, and I want them both to know that they're fully supported in everything that they do.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And if you could go back in time, little Jessica, and tell your parents, this is what I need.

JESSICA: Yeah. I wanted a hug, I feel like. I just wanted to feel like I was okay, you know?

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And you just didn't feel it.

JESSICA: Yeah. And my parents also got divorced when I was really young, my dad started using. There's a lot of factors there, right, that play a huge role in it. I'm not blaming it for it, like I became who I am and made my choices, right? But there's a lot of factors, I believe.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah. When you start clubbing and using drugs, what's the first drug?

JESSICA: You know, it started alcohol. Alcohol is a drug, right? Alcohol is a problem, you know? Then just one thing led to another because I was exposed to it, right? And at that point in my life, I didn't really care, I just wanted to feel something else, right? So it started with alcohol and then it became like pills, you know, and then it just leads on. Like the disease of addiction progresses. And I had that disease of addiction, so it didn't really matter what it is and what the substance was. But if you presented it to me, I was always curious, right?

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Was there a point where you wanted an off-ramp? Where you felt like, this is not good for me, I want to turn around?

JESSICA: I think once I was too far in it, yeah, but I just didn't know how to turn around.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah. And then rape is obviously the worst.

JESSICA: Yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Do you chalk that up also to being just in the wrong crowd, in the wrong place?

JESSICA: I mean, at the time, yeah, right? But older Jessica knows that, like, no matter if I was in the wrong place at the wrong time or not, like, that's still not OK.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, a thousand percent not OK. But I guess looking back over Jessica, looking back, is there a way you could have prevented that? I mean, now I would say talking to parents, but also talking to teenagers, like, how could you have protected yourself?

JESSICA: Yeah, probably not be around those situations, right? Probably not go clubbing at 17 years old, right?

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Did you tell anyone about the experience?

JESSICA: So in the beginning, I was really afraid because, you know, I still was that girl. I was, like, afraid that someone's going to judge me. Like, I didn't know, like, which way to go. But eventually I did speak up about it.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Did you get support? Did you get help?

JESSICA: So I didn't go to, like, the authorities, but I did get support as far as getting through it.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: How did you turn around? At some point, you describe yourself being too far in to be able to get help.

JESSICA: Yeah. So how did I end up getting help? So I was about to basically trauma dump on you. So I apologize in advance so early in the morning. But I was 24 years old and my boyfriend at the time was in prison and he got out and three days later he was found murdered. And, you know, that was like the first time in my life that I was sitting there and it was like a light bulb moment for me. Right. And like, in a sense, God spoke to me. He basically said, like, you know what it's like to basically die or, like, for majority of your life now, like you've been walking and just not living. Right. At all. And there's like these two choices here in your life. Do you want to continue on this path of death or do you want to try life?

JESSICA: And, like, I really realized that, like, I don't know what it's like to live. I'm 24 years old. Like, give myself a chance. And I went to treatment in a different country and my life has been truly, truly flipped completely in the other direction. One hundred and fifty percent. And it's the most amazing life I have today.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Right. I mean, like, I don't know anything about that world. I thankfully was spared from it. I don't even like taking Tylenol, really.

JESSICA: I don't care anymore.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: People keep trying to give me joints because I've never done anything. Zero. I just have no interest in it. And I feel like really lucky that I've never been tempted. I'm terrified for my kids, you know, all the time. But it just seems that, like you said, it's a snowball. Once you get into it, you just get really deep and it's hard to get out. And especially today, you hear, like, how many tens of thousands of deaths there are just from the drugs alone and not other violence related to it. And it's scary. And I guess what I'm saying, when I met you pregnant and not a clue, I don't know what I would expect, but zero clue about your early life, your teenage and early adult life. I could not detect anything.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And I was just blown away once we started talking, you know, over the visits and you shared more. And I guess a huge part of why I wanted you to come on the podcast or invited you. And I'm so grateful that you said yes is again, A, to see that you were really deep on a bad path and you can turn around and then both from the perspective of parents who want the best for their children and also for young adults who might be on a bad path or know somebody who is to hear from you and just see that there is a way to turn it around. And I guess you had this light bulb moment and that was a strong enough light bulb to illuminate through all the darkness and make you realize that you need to pick up the red pill or the blue pill, so to speak.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: What's rehab like? Because physically you have addiction that's in the brain that wants you to keep going down that path. And then mentally and emotionally, you had some things that were missing that obviously needed to be fulfilled in other ways. Yeah.

JESSICA: So where I went, I went to a treatment center in a different country. It was a long program and it's basically in a sense of like breaking you down and rebuilding you back up to a new person, you know, you're learning how to talk to people all over again, you're learning how to love yourself again, right? You're learning what your fears are, you know, what your goals are. All of these things, because for so long, you don't know how to live life, like I didn't know what accountability was, I didn't know any of these things that a productive member of society does every single day, right? I had to learn all these skills and all these things all over again. I wasted my whole youth, you know, on something that wasn't necessarily

JESSICA: beneficial to me, right? Now I can say that I've learned a lot and I use that experience, right? To help others, right? So now it's beneficial. But when I first got sober, like it was not beneficial to me whatsoever. So I had to learn everything all over again.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: What about the physical elements of withdrawing in your body, wanting and craving?

JESSICA: So the withdrawals, that was definitely a thing. They definitely existed. But, you know, they help you. It's a medicated, you know, you're not going to just like get thrown into a room, right? Like it's medical assisted, so they'll help you and the withdrawals will still be there, right? But in a sense, like they definitely helped me a lot with the beginning. But in a sense, like, I don't want to ever feel like that ever again. I don't want to feel like that. So in a sense, it's a good reminder.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: You don't want to feel how you felt physically in the withdrawal phase.

JESSICA: Yes, exactly. So like I was medicated for about 10 days, but 11 days and on, I was still not feeling the best. I wasn't sleeping, you know, all these things. It was very uncomfortable, but I was able to get through it, right? I still had people in the house that were there longer than me. That helped me out. I had the staff members that would walk me through it and help me out. Even when I had a little bit of like paranoia and all of that stuff, they still helped me out and guided me. And I got through it, right? The scary thing is about the drugs nowadays is that you never know what you're getting anymore, right? Like I didn't experience all of this. But nowadays, it's like the fentanyl is in everything, right?

JESSICA: It's in cocaine, in marijuana, just down the street from my house. I don't know if you've heard, but at the Los Angeles Tar Pits, there was a group of teenagers that ODed and they said that they ate edibles.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, really? No, I didn't know.

JESSICA: And, you know, that's the scary part about it. Like, you don't know what you're getting anymore. And people are dying left and right. It's so scary.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Honestly, it seems like it'll be in donuts. Yeah. I mean, the whole idea is to make it more addictive, right? But then it also becomes more lethal.

JESSICA: It's way more lethal.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Even through the office, their patients are primarily pregnant. The number of their relatives, you know, that practically die. Yeah. And like you said, 10 years ago, they wouldn't have. They don't know what they're getting. Yeah. OK, let's take a little break because I want to get to new Jessica and the incredible path that you're on now and learn about your journey to motherhood. We'll be right back. Welcome back. We are talking to Jessica and a couple of questions. I know that whenever I start to go on a program to lose weight, totally different, but also an addiction, everybody says, how are you going to keep it off? I'm like, let me lose it first. And then I'll come up with that plan. Eight years sober again. Congratulations.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: What a huge milestone. How do you maintain it? Is it still even ever become a struggle for you?

JESSICA: So I don't necessarily have the desire to use, but I know that when I am not continuing working on myself, as far as like going to, you know, AA NA meetings or working with a sponsor or just helping others in general, I'm not the most grateful person, right? When I'm not sleeping for two, you know, because my newborn is keeping me awake, I'm not the most grateful person. So I become not the nicest person. So that's how my disease works in me right now. Right. Like, so I go have to go back to a meeting to feed the spirit. Right. I don't want to use, but I just act out in other ways.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: You start to feel that void again, not the void.

JESSICA: I'm just not the most grateful. Let's say, okay. Yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I just wondered the void, the meaning, I guess the feelings, there was some kind of feeling of emptiness. Or, you know, not feeling as well as you needed or something like that.

JESSICA: Yeah, just not feeding my spirit, right? Just not feeding my spirit with good positive energy. Right.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: So then you need support.

JESSICA: Yes. It's not that I'm going to use, but I just don't want to continue that behavior. Right.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Okay. So eight years later, if you're not actively working on it, it has a negative effect on you.

JESSICA: Yes and no. So it's not that I have to like go every single day, right? But it just like adds up. And I don't necessarily think it's just me as an addict. I think all human beings have like, you know, moments where they're in negativity and just not feeling the best as a person. I just don't like that feeling. So I want to continue just being a better person.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: It's so important though, because I think every human also has things that when we are feeling something like that, some sort of discomfort inside mentally, spiritually, physically, we gravitate towards things that are not healthy for us, whether it's something as hard for as heroin or in my case, Krispy Kreme or drink or retail therapy, or is something that ultimately is not really helping you, but more masking that discomfort that you're feeling. And so as humans, we all need to find more healthy ways to build those discomforts, to manage those discomforts and feed the

spirit. I think that's a beautiful imagery and then doesn't go away. So I think even yes, in me and my personal journey, if I'm going to be

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: selfish, if I do lose the weight, it's not like I just have to get from this number to that number and I'll be cool in order to stay there. I really have to have my own come to Moses, if you will, and, you know, see where's the need coming from and how can I feed in healthier ways?

JESSICA: Yeah, exactly. So that's why meetings come into play for me. We're just talking to other addicts. Perfect example, you know, when the pandemic happened, my family, for example, they use like a glass of wine every night to cope, right? For me, I just went to meetings on zoom.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I got you. Yeah. And also people came to a lot of weight, you know, all the addictions. Additionally, alone, you don't have the human interaction that you need. It's a scary time. So you have that gnawing away at your insides and yeah, that's powerful and helpful, I think to anyone, helping other people with literally going through the phases that you went through must be meaningful. Also, I imagine not everybody succeeds, you know, in the way that you have, is that hard for you?

JESSICA: Yeah, because, you know, I wish I can just help everyone and really show them that there's more to life than just using substances, but unfortunately that isn't the case, but I just put in as much effort as I can and hope that maybe even if they don't get it this time, they heard something that I told them and it will stick for next time.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: It must be for the ones who do succeed, they must be eternally grateful to you and the other people working with you.

JESSICA: Yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: To leave that chapter, I wonder you've had some pretty horrible things happen to you during that time that you've mentioned. How do you resolve those things? Are you able to leave them fully in the past?

JESSICA: Yeah. So I don't know if you've heard about the 12 steps. So basically I did a lot of work on myself to let go of those things, to basically let them go and accept them that that's a part of me, but that's not what makes me right. That was in my past and I've embraced that Jessica. I gave that Jessica a hug, but those moments don't define who I am today because of the 12 steps and I've been able to let them go. And I use it as a strength towards helping other women.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Um, let's talk about new Jessica.

JESSICA: Yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: The one that I know enough. So you have kids. How did you meet your current partner? World's different than previous partners.

JESSICA: Yeah, I met him through a friend, actually very old school, right? I feel like everyone meets now like either online or something, but yeah, dating app, so surprisingly that wasn't the case. I met

through a friend, they grew up together in New York, but he was living in Los Angeles and he basically insisted that she introduced us.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, where were you in life at that point when you met?

JESSICA: I was about a year sober, just started working in mental health and substance abuse, just, you know, I was still young, exploring my options.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah. Was that your first relationship since?

JESSICA: First real, first one, but really count.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: If people could see your face, they would say that one didn't count at all.

JESSICA: Yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah. So how did that feel to have a healthy relationship? What seems like the first time?

JESSICA: So I did everything different. You know, I didn't like jump in. We really got to know each other. We just like dated, you know, it was something I didn't do and didn't know how to do and we did that. And I finally gave myself a chance, right? Like in my mind, I always had this image and persona of who I wanted to be with, which was always toxic and it was never truly to feel and be loved. Right. It was a whole different world. And this is the first time that I actually gave someone a chance to love me, right, to make me feel special and make me feel safe and make me feel loved, right, and was totally different. Right. Like from that Jessica, I just like kind of like morphed into a Jessica

JESSICA: that you wanted me to be to now a Jessica that knows who I am, that loves myself and knows what I deserve. Right. So it's totally different.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Hard to open yourself up in order to let yourself be loved that way.

JESSICA: Yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: It's like you have to let some guard down.

JESSICA: Oh, it was definitely a struggle in the beginning. I remember calling someone I was like, what to do, you know, but I just like allowed myself to walk through those fears because it was very new and it felt very weird. And in a sense, I also wanted to almost protect myself just in case I was going to get hurt. Right. So I had to really just like feel uncomfortable and feel the uncomfortability of someone actually loving me. Right.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Which was the ultimate desire.

JESSICA: Yeah, exactly. But it was still scary because it was all new. Yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: A weird mix of feelings.

JESSICA: Yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Had you thought about motherhood either before that relationship, during that relationship? I mean, I imagine it was the furthest thing for your mind before recovery.

JESSICA: Oh yeah. Yeah. But once I did get into recovery, I definitely loved the idea of having kids. Like I remember, I don't know, like if there's one wish, like I just want to be a mom. Right. And I think it's in a sense of, I want to do things a little bit differently than how I felt I was raised. And it might have not even been true, but like the way that I felt when I was being raised, I want to do the total opposite. And motherhood is a feeling of unconditional love that I feel like I really wanted to experience, like from your kids on that unconditional pure love, like it's everything.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Which side of it to give unconditional love and also receive it.

JESSICA: Yeah. Yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I mean, that sounds like a lot of pressure too.

JESSICA: Yeah. Yeah, for sure.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: On both sides, like not wanting to, I guess, quote unquote fail. That's that.

JESSICA: Oh, for sure.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And the responsibility that comes along with that.

JESSICA: Yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: So then did you guys make a conscious choice? Let's have a kid.

JESSICA: So he's a little older than me. So we both had talked about it, but we never had like a set plan. I know that in February of 2020, I found out I was pregnant and I was very scared. Once the reality kicked in, I was very scared, but I ended up miscarrying. It was like chemical pregnancies. I think I was more scared because I didn't know if I was in a sense, maybe even worthy to be a mom. Like, you know, the power of the mind is so strong that like, it almost wants to make me doubt myself, right? That's the disease of addiction is also in the mind. It's in the mind and the power of the thinking. And it always wanted to make me doubt myself when I was very sure of what I wanted in my life.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: So you wanted motherhood.

JESSICA: I wanted motherhood, but once the time came to it, I was so afraid.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And you got pregnant, but not consciously.

JESSICA: No, not consciously.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: But then you found out you were pregnant with a pregnancy test.

JESSICA: Yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And if it's a chemical pregnancy, so essentially you had the positive test, but then the pregnancy didn't progress pretty early. You don't even see a baby usually. So how long was it from the time that you found out you're pregnant to the time you found out you were not

pregnant?

JESSICA: It was about three days.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And so it sounds like a very emotional three days. And I don't want to put words into your mouth, but it almost sounds like excited to be pregnant, terrified to be pregnant.

JESSICA: Yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Want this pregnancy, lost this pregnancy.

JESSICA: Yeah. Which I feel like that's like kind of a normal rollercoaster of feelings in the beginning.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah. I think for a lot of people, sure. Yeah. But the loss, where did that leave you?

JESSICA: It definitely left me confused, but I will say it didn't really affect me that much mentally, cause it was like three days. So I was still on this like whirlwind of like feelings and emotions that I didn't fully like looking back. Right. Cause I had another loss after my daughter and that was like very. Difficult for me. So I think that loss really had me confused.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: If that makes sense, the initial one or the second initial one. Right. That's what I'm saying. Where did it leave you? Because you had all these funds of, wait, I want this, but maybe I don't want this or I want this, but I can't do this or.

JESSICA: I think once I experienced the loss, then I kind of said, okay, maybe this is not the right time.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, okay. So that's where I guess I was going. Did it make you even more want to crave it and like, we got to do this or did it push it off for you?

JESSICA: And made me way more open to being pregnant and having a child. Yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And when you got pregnant with your daughter, was that time more of a conscious conception?

JESSICA: Yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: A decision both made together was a little hard to get pregnant.

JESSICA: No, I found that I was pregnant maybe after my first cycle. So two months later. Okay.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah. Seems like a good place to take a break and find out how pregnancy and childbirth went. Welcome back, Jessica. Okay. Turn your whole life around. You meet a guy who is the right guy who loves you and you feel the love and you get pregnant by accident and have a myriad of feelings about it. But only for three days, chemical pregnancy left you open to pregnancy with thoughts of motherhood, and then you consciously get pregnant. How was your pregnancy? How are the different stages of pregnancy for you?

JESSICA: So it was the pandemic. So let's throw that factor in overall. The pregnancy went pretty well. I did have a lot of fears of like, what's going to happen with the world's lockdown, you know, dead outside. The pregnancy went well overall. However, I did end up developing colostasis with her. Okay.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: So if you're talking about colostasis, that means the first trimester, second trimester, no surprises.

JESSICA: Yeah, nothing.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Okay. Strong, healthy.

JESSICA: Yep. In just 37 weeks. Yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: So colostasis, your gallbladder freaks out and gets it backs up. And then the bile salts start to make you itchy.

JESSICA: Yes.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Your hands and the feet is the characteristic symptom, but there's a tiny chance that if it progresses, the colostasis progresses aside from your discomfort for some reason that we don't fully understand it could lead to instant fetal death. And so they want to get the baby out as quickly as possible. Before the diagnosis of colostasis, did you have any thoughts on childbirth? I mean, for one thing, it's generally a drug heavy process in America. And you said you don't like to take Tylenol.

JESSICA: So I didn't know anything about childbirth. I have so many opinions on this because I feel like as an OB-GYN, they need to do at one of your prenatal visits, have like a mandatory, you know, then you should go over proper like labor etiquette, right? Whether it's breathing or pushing or different positions, but they don't. And then they throw you in to fend for yourself in a sense.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Did they not suggest or present a child with education class?

JESSICA: Nothing.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, okay. So a lot of doctors and hospitals do offer those classes. And then separate from that, privately, there's a million one classes that now today are accessible in person, online, hybrid, and I always recommend it because there's a gazillion different ways to have a baby today. And some of them will be more or less appealing to each person. And even with that, it's a flow chart. You might have a desire to do it a certain way, but then sort of get colostasis and lose some of the choices. So it's sort of good to learn all the different options and make your own flow chart. Okay. So you didn't know anything going in, but did you know that it was drug heavy?

JESSICA: I didn't honestly was like, had something to do with the pandemic. And like, maybe that's why there weren't really any childbirth classes available towards the end, like watch some videos. I did know about like the epidural. I knew about stuff like that. I didn't know what Patosin was. I didn't even know what being induced really meant. Yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: You're not alone. I mean, even non-pandemic, that's the whole reason we started informed pregnancy is because the number of times things came up that people were surprised by like how little they knew compared to what would have been helpful to them.

JESSICA: Yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: So with your colostasis, then not too many choices, I guess, induction or C-section.

JESSICA: Induction.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: How'd that go?

JESSICA: Rough.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: In what way?

JESSICA: Well, I had to do every form of induction. So I had to do the servodil. I had to do the balloon.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, you did the balloon filling. Okay.

JESSICA: Yeah. I did the servodil. I did the balloon. I did Patosin. I did the water breaking.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: This will be an excellent time to plug our episode on induction methods because it sounds like you could actually write the Zagat guide, all the different types of methods. Servodil to ripen your cervix and then a balloon folate to help you dilate, and then it sounds like Patosin after that.

JESSICA: Yep.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Okay. Do you have an epidural through the whole thing?

JESSICA: So I got the epidural once they put the balloon in because with the servodil, once my contractions started, I was having severe back labor, spacing my spine. And so I tolerated the pain for like four hours and then I couldn't anymore. Actually, it would have been like around six, seven hours that I tolerated the pain and then around like 4 AM I got that epidural and they started it around five. So 12 hours, I guess.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Am I crazy to think, again, I don't know anything about the drug world, but needles, IVs, injections, does that bring back anything?

JESSICA: So I remember them offering me before the epidural, they offered me morphine or fentanyl and I denied it because I didn't know how it's going to make me feel.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah.

JESSICA: So I was like, I don't want that. So that's why I suffered through it, you know, for quite a while, but they don't trigger me, but I just choose not to try.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah, no, totally. I just don't like, I have muscle memory from things in the past, but you know, when those things happen, they trigger those things from the past.

JESSICA: Yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And I hate needles. I don't mind putting them in other people. I don't like them coming into me. So to me, all needles are the same, but to you, it sounds like there's big nuance.

JESSICA: I also feel like from doing blood work so much, I just kind of desensitized that. Oh yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah. I think that's like, it would be good for me to get pregnant and then I'd get over my pain with needles.

JESSICA: Yeah. Yeah, exactly.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I keep trying.

JESSICA: Yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Okay. So induction through all the different things. Did you make progress?

JESSICA: I did. I did push her out rather quickly actually for my first, but I definitely pushed her out wrong. Let's just say that.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: What does that mean even?

JESSICA: Well, I believe that the hospital coaches you to push incorrectly.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: You mean because they're looking at the monitor and they

JESSICA: fear contract making you hold your breath and push.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, right. Right, right.

JESSICA: You know, allowing yourself to follow your body's lead and push when you truly, you know, need to push as opposed to like taking a deep breath and pushing for 10 seconds. I truly believe that really affects your pelvic floor. Very.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, so you had postpartum like pelvic floor trauma.

JESSICA: Yeah. But I also adore a lot.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, okay. And what was the baby posterior? I mean, it was the skull against your spine. Was that causing the back vapor? Was the position?

JESSICA: I think she was facing. Yeah, spacing.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Right. So I wonder if that played a factor also, but for sure you see as a doula, I've seen both models of pushing and that sort of intuitive pushing that you'll often see under

midwifery care and especially on Medicaid, like at a home birth is a whole different world, I bet. And then the other thing is without the epidural, they can get into a lot of different positions. It's kind of interesting if they're not coached or positions aren't suggested or told to them, it's interesting to watch like what position someone gets into generally. It's not on their back with their legs up, but sometimes it is. That's the natural intuitive position, but oftentimes it isn't more oftentimes. It isn't there like on all fours or squatting on their side or

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: and you don't have those sensors. We deactivate the sensors. So it's a little hard, like in one sense, you sometimes see they need to coach you on pushing because otherwise you don't feel the natural impulses to push.

JESSICA: So it's so dumb. I couldn't even move myself up. I was so dumb.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: How did you recover from all of that?

JESSICA: The public floor, the tearing, you know, I just did yoga at home and online workouts, right?

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Cause still pandemics.

JESSICA: Yeah. And my pelvic floor now two babies later, I'm going to physical therapy and I'm doing Pilates. So that's different.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: A lot different.

JESSICA: Yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I guess if I'm plugging things, I should also plug Natalie headings who has uninformed pregnancy plus with this subscription library, a powerful, but introductory pelvic floor program called the core connection and a master class on pelvic floor, like having a specialist in your home, which is called mindful movement. And she's just an amazing educator. And it's one thing to have the knowledge and it's another thing to be able to transmit it to somebody else in a way that you can receive it and understand it. And then also give you the remedies, the solutions for repairing and maintaining health and core. Okay. So then you have another baby. You have a myth carriage.

JESSICA: I did a pretty intense one.

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

JESSICA: So I got pregnant. I was really excited to bring in another little human into this world and I went to my first visit. Everything was great. I heard the heartbeat and I was going back to my 12 week appointment and there was no heartbeat and the baby stopped growing at nine weeks.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I was hoping you didn't know.

JESSICA: I didn't know. And I had to get a DNC.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: How old was your daughter during this time?

JESSICA: She was just turning two.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Okay. So sort of a good space. And was it the conscious choice of this pregnancy?

JESSICA: Yes.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Okay. So, so much harder, I guess, in a lot of different ways, but the chemical pregnancy three days, this is seeing the heartbeat, growing, bonding, picturing, you know, the family at four.

JESSICA: Yeah. I almost didn't want to have another kid after that experience because I was so afraid of going through that again. I'm sorry. Yeah, that was a lot. I felt alone. You know, I felt, I was very confused, very confused. Alone.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Why? I mean, alone from your partner, alone because you had your daughter, are you saying alone? Because why did this happen to me?

JESSICA: Like, yeah, I just felt like no one else can truly understand what I'm going through. So I was just kind of stuck with my emotions and feelings by myself, but it could have just been me distancing myself from everyone as well.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Did you at that time know how common her first trimester miscarriages are?

JESSICA: I did. And I think also, I think there was a feeling that there was something wrong with my body that it just wouldn't release it on its own. And then I had to, in addition, have a DNC. I think that's what really affected me is that, you know, Hey, you lost the pregnancy. Now let's figure out a plan of how to, you know, clear your body from it.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah, but I could see you're not wanting to let go.

JESSICA: Yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I'm sorry. I've had to go through that. Okay.

JESSICA: I have a beautiful family now.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: So, yeah, I mean, so you do have another baby and how did you push past the feeling of not wanting to do it again?

JESSICA: So to be honest, I think if it was up to me, I would have waited a lot longer, but I guess it just kind of happened. Was it like, we weren't trying, but we weren't necessarily being the safest. Yeah. But I will say there was a lot of fears that whole pregnancy. Cause I was terrified of having another loss. Yeah. And not only that, but with this pregnancy, I had an anterior placenta, so I didn't always necessarily feel the movement.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: So the placenta is between you and the baby and a lot of the kicking and other movements get muffled. You don't feel them as well. So that just leads to a little more worry.

JESSICA: Yes, exactly. God works in my life. He's very funny, really.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Did you get close to this again?

JESSICA: I did not, but I was on high watch.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Okay. So did you have a plan for birth? I mean, knowing a lot more.

JESSICA: I definitely didn't want to get induced. That was one thing for sure. I wanted to try to do unmedicated. I didn't, I got medicated, but it was very minimal and it was a completely different experience than what it was like with my daughter.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: One question before we get to that is, did you do anything consciously to try to prevent colostasis or you're just waiting to see what happens?

JESSICA: I don't think you can prevent colostasis.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: There's ideas and thoughts. There's nothing concrete. I just didn't know if anything was recommended to you.

JESSICA: Uh, no.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Okay. So you didn't get the itchy palms, but high alert meaning they're testing your blood for the salts and stuff.

JESSICA: Yeah. So I did have some itching. At one point I was doing blood work every two weeks because it would go up a little bit, the numbers, and then it would level out and then it would go up, but then down. So it was still within normal range, which could still cause the itchiness, but it wasn't at the level of colostasis concern.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Exactly. Okay. So did labor start spontaneously?

JESSICA: I ended up getting a membrane sweep.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Okay. Really spontaneous, not the, I don't know, party mix of induction methods you had the first time.

JESSICA: Yeah. And I seen you and I got acupuncture at your office as well. I tried all the natural remedies because I just did not want to put my body through what I went through the first time if I didn't have to.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: How soon after your membrane sweep did you feel things happening?

JESSICA: Within an hour.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Okay. That's a good sweep. Did you feel these in your back as well, or was this more in front?

JESSICA: I did. And that's why I decided to end up getting medicated. You know, I stayed at home for a while. I made sure my daughter got picked up and I stayed at home as long as I can. And then I went to the hospital because I just couldn't that pain in my back. Like I tried baths. I was like breathing. I was walking. I was trying all the things, but my back literally felt like it was going to snap in

half. Yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: You know, the number of times I've seen that as a doula and it's like, if you can't make that stop as you can't get the baby in a better position, which is usually the culprit, or you just can't make it stop, it looks so insanely torturous, honestly. And then the epidural makes it go away completely for most people. So you got that epidural, any other induction agents or?

JESSICA: So they did end up giving me eventually a small dose of pitocin, but that was only because the baby's heart rate kept spiking. Up.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Up. Oh, okay. So they wanted the baby out faster.

JESSICA: Cause I was stuck at like a five.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Okay.

JESSICA: So then they broke my water in hopes that it would progress, but he was just stuck at a five, but his heart rate kept going up. So then they eventually put fluids back in me know what was causing it.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah. And breaking your water didn't help.

JESSICA: Yeah. They believed that the reason why it kept spiking is because he was born with a really short and vocal cord. So every contraction, it was like a strain on him in a sense.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah. Tugging.

JESSICA: But I was on a very, very mild dose.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Just an appetizer.

JESSICA: Yeah, exactly. But just enough because they didn't want, you know, when a baby's heart rate is really high for so long, they're going to want to resort to other ways, right?

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah, totally. Well, they want the baby out the fastest way possible.

JESSICA: Exactly.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Um, did you get past five?

JESSICA: Yes, very quickly.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And for pushing, knowing what you knew from last time, did you do things any different?

JESSICA: Uh, a hundred percent. Like I remember I was laying there on my side. I was like, I'm ready to push. And they're like, no, you're not. We just checked you and you're at eight. I'm like, this baby's coming out. I'm ready. You know, I really trusted my body a lot more, basically allowed my body to do what it's supposed to do as a woman. And like they told me to stop. They told me to wait. I'm like, I'm pushing this baby out because the baby is coming, you know, and.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Sounds like you're on a lighter epidural.

JESSICA: Did you really trust in my body?

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Did you feel more physical sensations also? Okay. So less than them.

JESSICA: Yes. Way less than them.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Okay. And you did it your way and baby came up very easily.

JESSICA: Yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Okay. Did you tear?

JESSICA: Um, it was a very, very like one or two stitches, like nothing.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Okay. So minimal compared to the time.

JESSICA: Yes. It was truly a complete different experience. And that's because I allowed myself to really feel empowered. Right. And really allow my body to do its thing.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Beautiful was the worry, the extra anxiety that you had during this pregnancy because of the miscarriage between your two babies. Did that dissipate during the pregnancy or not until you're holding

JESSICA: the baby on you, not until I was holding the baby on me because of the fact that I couldn't always feel the movement, even eight, nine months in, even eight, nine months pregnant. There were days I just would feel very minimal movement. Yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I mean, it sounds like it makes that moment even more emotional.

JESSICA: Yeah. It truly was a lot more emotional, but also relieving.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah. Well, are you done?

JESSICA: Well, I'm in the thick of it right now. So as of right now, it's not an absolute. No, it's not an absolute no more.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah.

JESSICA: You know, right now I'm like no more, but I also have a three year old and a four month old. So as of right now I'm done, but I'm open.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Awesome. Well, is there anything that I didn't ask that you wanted to share?

JESSICA: I just wanted to share that looking back at what my life was, right. And like what I thought I deserved and like to where my life is today. I can't even come up with words to explain like how truly blessed I am. Right. I have this amazing family. Right. I have people that genuinely care and love me. Right. And like all these things, right. Like possibilities are endless once you give yourself a chance. Right. And I never gave myself a chance. And once I finally did, like I finally get to experience life like

how you do, you know, like just a normal human being does, and I never did. And it's just like, I can't even put in two words, you know, like I have people that depend on me, right. I have a job that depends on me.

JESSICA: None of these things would have really existed in my previous life. You know, for anyone that's struggling, I know it's easier said than done, but just give yourself a chance. Right. Like I always tell people like, just give yourself a chance for a year. And if you don't like how your life is happening within that year, like your old life is still right there, right. I can promise you that your life will change as long as you put in the work within that year, you know, there's so much to look forward to. There's so much to be grateful for. I feel like not enough people give themselves a chance.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: What about Jessica for people who have loved ones who are stuck in that world, in the world of addiction?

JESSICA: You know, it's really hard for me to answer that now as a parent, right. But I will say that like, there is a chance, right, for your loved one, for your child, for your sibling, for whoever they are to you, like to get this right. And sometimes I feel like they didn't necessarily want this life for themselves, so give them that grace, right. Fully support them, but also don't enable them because if you continue to enable them, they're going to continue to do this behavior.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: You know, it's an incredibly challenging balance to find.

JESSICA: Yeah. And I also feel like addiction is just not about the addict. The diseases in the whole family and a sense of like how the parent takes care of that addict, right. It's a disease of the mind. Let's say if I have someone that I'm helping, but I'm not an addict, but I'm constantly enabling them, that's my disease, right. That's my addiction. So I just feel like support them, but not over support them in a sense of they have to kind of figure it out on their own, right. Right.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: It sounds like until you had your giant light bulb moment, there isn't much anybody could have done to show you the light and had to come to you.

JESSICA: Yeah, exactly. I had to come to that decision. No one can force me to that decision. And I'm also grateful that my parents kind of backed off of me. So I was able to get to that place on my own, right. I didn't really have my parents to rely on to enable me. And I think that's part of why I ended up getting sober so young, right. Cause I was kind of fending for myself for so long that I was able to hit that like complete bottom on my own, if that makes sense and it's hard. It's hard because I don't know what I would do now as a parent, right. But I know what has worked for me, right.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah. But you also see so many other people on the struggle on the journey.

JESSICA: And I see the difference between patients where their parents are giving them everything they want at all times. They're never going to want it because they get everything they want so freely. Right.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Why change course?

JESSICA: Yeah. But the ones that don't have anything usually want more in a sense of like they want something different and they want something else and they want. Yeah, exactly.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I can't thank you enough for coming and sharing such deep personal experiences. I mean, I'm going to be processing this episode on my own for the foreseeable future, and I know, and I can only hope and pray that the right people will hear your story and your experience and the possibilities from darkness to light and just either be inspired themselves or find a way to inspire their loved ones. But for all of us as parents, just a very strong reminder, how important our role is and, you know, just checking in and making sure that, I had a friend who worked with at-risk teens and he sort of had this method, I don't know if it was zone or he got it from someplace else, but he called it the

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: pizza pie and there were like eight different categories of checking in on these teenagers and their overall health and wellbeing, physical mind, body, spirit, you know, how is the family component? How is the friend component? And do you have aspirations or career goals and just all these different things and it's complex and people are complex and it's great to give them things and it's great to love them. But I think it's deeper and it's not easy and I don't think there's any one handbook on how to do it right, but it's worth the struggle and it's worth constantly evaluating and learning and seeing, you know, checking in with the kids really. Though I think they'll tell you.

JESSICA: I think that's also of like making them feel like you're their safe place that you can talk to them about anything without judgment, right? I think that's very important basically to the house should be like a safe zone. So even if there's things that necessarily as a parent you want to hear, but for the fact for your child to feel safe enough to come up to you about it and discuss it with you. I think that's what's really important.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: You know, I did read a book when my kids were a little bit, I wished I had read it when they were even younger, but thankfully they were young enough for me to get some benefit out of it. It's called hold onto your kids, why parents need to matter more than peers by Gordon Neufeld. And that message was so powerful that your kids need to feel essentially. I don't know if he said this because I read it a long time ago, but essentially you see that mother duck walking along with the little ducklings behind her and kids coming to this world, knowing nothing and needing a leader, needing someone to show them the ropes in this world and braving to attach to someone who's going to guide them.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And once in a while you see these pictures of the mother walking along and there's three ducks and a little pig and the pig didn't get the mothering from the mother pig. So she went to the next thing, which is this duck family. And Gordon Neufeld basically says, if you're not going to be the one where they feel safe, totally safe and secure and confident and comfortable coming for support, then they're going to find it someplace else. And usually it's the peers and peers are an awful place to get that safety and security from, because they let you down all the time and leave you feeling pretty empty and low, even if they don't mean to. So I guess if there's one book I can recommend from personal experience,

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: it's Hold On To Your Kids by Gordon Neufeld. Jessica, I really appreciate you. I feel so blessed to know you, to work with you and to learn from you. And I wish you nothing but

success in your personal life and your relationship and your family life and in all the great work that you're doing professionally.

JESSICA: Thank you. I'm so glad that I was able to come out here and share my experience. And I'm so grateful that I got the opportunity of meeting you. You know, I've met with you during my pregnancy and after, and you've helped me so much. So thank you.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: My pleasure. It's such an honor at home. Thanks for listening to the Informed Pregnancy podcast for more pregnancy and parenting information. As I keep dropping and teasing, there's a whole library here of over 400 episodes on the podcast, but there is also some great stuff on our blog and Informed Pregnancy Plus. You can find it all at informedpregnancy.com.

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