Hilary Duff: A Birth Story (Part 1)

Episode 416 · July 18, 2024 · with Hilary Duff

IN THIS EPISODE

Hilary Duff is back — this time as a mother of four. In Part 1 of a two-part conversation recorded early one morning, she catches Dr. Elliot Berlin, DC up on her fourth pregnancy, the recent birth, and life with a full house and a bustling career.

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

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Welcome to the Informed Pregnancy and Parenting Podcast. I'm your host, pregnancy-focused chiropractor Dr. Elliot Berlain. Today's episode is the first of a two-part episode with one of my favorite guests and a listener favorite who is now a mother of four. She's joining me to share her experiences with her fourth pregnancy and recent birth, and how she's navigating life with a full house and a bustling career. We recorded our conversation early in the morning. Before we knew it, our time was up, but we had much more to discuss, so we came back later that night and recorded part two. You may know her as super talented actress and recording artist with a career spanning over two decades

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: as well as a social media icon who candidly shares about her life, love, and work. Hilary Duff, welcome back to the podcast. Thank you so much. My gosh, you make me sound way more important than I am. You are definitely, if Syria has eight arms, you must have 10 for everything that you do. I don't know how you get it done, and with energy and with a smile, I'm inspired and humbled at the same time. Also, I need to tell you, you're one of the most popular guests on our podcast. We have over 400 episodes. Yours from back when you had your second baby is still one of the most listened to because of your candid description and great storytelling of what it was like to have

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: a baby with all the drugs and a baby without any of the drugs. It has really empowered a lot of people one way or the other to say, okay, yes, I want the one with all the drugs or I want to feel everything and have no drugs, but it really helps give people perspective on what the options are and what they can be like. I'm forever grateful to you for sharing so openly and helping

them out. You know what? That's so nice. And honestly,

HILARY DUFF: your podcast is giving me the space to share that with people and no judgment either way. I've had both experiences, obviously, and I have to tell you that every time right before I give birth, I'm like, I'm going to the hospital. That's it. Give me all the drugs. I don't think I can do this again. And then for some reason, I always choose the other alternative, of course, because it's my most favorite experience, I think. Well, I think anytime you have more than three kids, everybody's first question is, was that an accident? No, we actually planned this baby. But you know what, everything in my life, I think I'm maybe one of the most impulsive thought out people I know. Does that make any sense? Like I do

HILARY DUFF: hash things out. I have worked it out in my head, but I haven't really shared with anybody yet. So by the time I'm like, ready to get pregnant, I'm like, basically pregnant, or, you know, we're moving. And, you know, everyone's like, Oh, my God, okay, I guess they're moving. Like, it seems like this quick decision, but usually it's been, I don't know, I'm a Libra, so I'm not going to like go make a crazy decision. Getting a pet, we got a kitten right before we had a baby. We had maybe got a puppy, like, you know, I don't know, there's a lot of quick decisions made in my life, but because the house felt empty. I think it's more just like, how can we make it the most

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: full? That's fair. I think you're doing a great job. You have a ton of kids. Yeah,

HILARY DUFF: we have a ton of kids. I lost track. But we have a ton of kids. But we started going. You can't really ask sympathy from people that I notice when you go in for baby number four, when you're like, Oh, my God, our life is crazy. Oh, this is nuts. You're like, you knew it was nuts at three. And then you went in for number four. So this

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: is your choice. Yeah, totally. That's that. I remember my comedy icon, Jim Gaffigan. I think he has five kids now. And he did a thing when he had his fourth kid. He opened up his special by saying, I became a father and the crowd goes nuts. Absolutely wild. And then he says for the fourth time and it's pin drop silence. And he's like, yeah, never much applause for the fourth kid. Like, it's like a lifestyle that you chose. And then he says, if you want to know what it's like to have your fourth baby, just picture yourself drowning and someone hands you a baby. You know, yeah, I can relate to that. But you like want to anyway. Okay. And then also, is it a joint decision where you're both like, okay, yeah, let's

HILARY DUFF: have another one. Yes. So my husband loves to make it seem like I'm so crazy. I'm so nuts. I'm like, you know, make our life this mayhem chaotic place, but he is just as down as me. He's just as crazy. Yeah. And you know, when we decided we were kind of like, we're both the same age. He's like six months older than me. And we were like, okay, I was really like, I need to wrap my head around this. Like, are we done? Am I done? Because I'm fine with that. But like, I could go again. And he's like, I think I could go again. So we just decided like, okay, we're going to do this. And then, you know, luckily, it was really easy for us. And, you know, there's two

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: lines on the stick. And you're like, oh, here we go again. Once you order the pizza, it's on its way. Okay, so now do you feel like, okay, this is definitely it. We're done. Or is

there still like a question mark?

HILARY DUFF: Oh, no, we're definitely done. Yeah. That got a mastectomy two weeks

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: before I gave birth. Okay, so you're 99.9% done. Yeah.

HILARY DUFF: I never know. We're definitely done. It's hard when you're in that stage with a new baby, and you realize how fast it's going. Like, the town is already six weeks old. And it's so yummy, like the time is just, you know, intoxicating, I guess. And you're like, oh, my God, this is it. It's already going by so fast. This is it. She's holding up her neck. She's smiling at us like, all of the moments that you don't like, okay, the first few weeks are so hard. And you're like, God, like, of course, I love my baby. But this is just brutal, right? Then you get like a smile. You're like, oh, that's what we do this for, you know, those little moments of like, just you can't even like put words to it. I think those are starting to

HILARY DUFF: happen. And we're like, this is the last one. Yeah, so sometimes that's when I guess maybe that's why you do the vasectomy before the baby comes because

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I think that's why Matt said that he was like, no, you start having those feelings. But how is that? I mean, it's interesting to know that it's your last one. And then to go through all those different stages, the end of pregnancy, the last childbirth, the last

HILARY DUFF: The end of my pregnancy was so awful this time around. I was like, I'm never doing this again. Never, never. And that's the truth. My body is like done.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: What was different this time?

HILARY DUFF: I probably need to go back and listen to our podcast to be like, was I miserable or not? Because I don't remember being miserable. I'm impatient. Of course, I want the baby out like from like 37 weeks on and like get it out. But this time around, I was just in a lot of pain. Like my back hurt, my ribs hurt. I could not sleep. I had crazy insomnia. I had this weird like patch of burning skin on my rib cage. It was so strange. It was no like rash, no sign of like anything. It would just burn. I can't even remember all of the like lightning crotch. That was awful. I felt like lightning bolt was hitting my sorry, my vagina bone nonstop. It was just the pressure. I think it was the weight of the baby.

HILARY DUFF: Like everything just, I was not feeling it towards the end. And I was fine to do stuff for my kids, my family, but I just got very like isolated. I was like, I got to just hunker down, keep my head down and get this over with, you know.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I do remember that at the end for you. You were just

HILARY DUFF: assumed under water and not available to the outside. I was. And I think having two very young kids that are super demanding on me, they did not understand that like I couldn't climb up into their bunk bed and I couldn't carry them everywhere they wanted to go and fling them around and, you know, have endless energy like I normally do. I just felt really overwhelmed by the end there.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: What do you attribute it to? Is it having the toddlers, like you're saying, is it just being older? Is it fourth time around body wear and tear?

HILARY DUFF: Yeah, I think it was all of those things. Just a combination of, I also have like a preteen, you know, like also grappling with like him. He just graduated and he's going into middle school and he just got a cell phone that broke my heart. Like I don't even have words to describe how I feel about that. And then, yeah, I have a three year old. Three is an annoying age, you know. They say it's the terrible twos with one year of experience.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: That's so much better than a three-nager.

HILARY DUFF: Oh yes, a three-nager. No, no, that is so much better than a year of experience. She's my funniest child by far, but holy Lord, she's killing me right now.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yes, I mean, there's just a lot, you know, everybody compares the first and second and the first is interesting. Everything's brand new. You're the youngest of all your pregnancies. Your body hasn't been through all that wear and tear. And then by the second, there's usually no time for self and that makes it a lot harder. But the house you're

HILARY DUFF: Okay, so poor Meimei because I actually feel like I had two first pregnancies, you know, because Banks is six and a half years, like almost seven years difference from Luca and I was 30. So I was like at the perfect age to have a baby. Like I was just like more confident, more comfortable. Like I knew what I was doing because I had Luca at 24, but I was like not in my body yet at 24. I was like wailing, you know, and also no cohort of people pregnant, giving birth, becoming parents. None of that. None of that was Luca. So I was really like figuring that out by myself, but with Banks, and she also got to have like almost all the attention as an only child. And it wasn't until May came along where I was like, oh, this is hard. Got it.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And then you decided to do it again. And then we decided to do it again.

HILARY DUFF: Because it's weird to juggle three. It's already getting a little bit easier at six weeks with the fourth than with the third. You're just like, okay, I'm totally fine to tell you no right now. Oh, I literally can't do that right now. I'm feeding the baby, you know, like, and they have each other. And I mean, it's still I feel guilty all the time, but for some reason this time around, maybe it's because I know it's my last and trying to enjoy it. And I know that the other girls won't remember and you know, they bounce back so fast. So can you drive me here? And I'm like, no, they're like, okay. And then they go off to the next day.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah, I'm reflecting back. My kids are old now. They're 16, 18, 20, 14, somewhere all around there. And I definitely remember as we had more kids, in a way it became easier. They become a little bit less dependent on you as they get older. And they can even be helpful. Hey, grab a diaper. Come help me do this. Watch the baby for a second. But what you're saying is something I never realized, but I think it's true for us too, which is that you just realize you have limitations and you don't have a choice whether you feel bad or not. You have a yes and a no list and it's not always going to be yes. And you get used to it. And actually I think it's better for them too in the long run. But it's hard to get used to

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: that and more experience you have parenting, the more you realize this is how it is. I want to find out about this last birth and then a million questions about everything else as a mom, a mom with growing kids. But let's take a quick break and we'll be right back. Welcome back.

We're talking to Hilary Duff, mom of four. And still, despite what you say, a ball of energy. Okay. Let's talk about the birth. You have baby number four. So recap. First one, you were going to do a C-section. Psychic says the baby wants to choose how he's going to come out. So you have a fully-medicated birth at the hospital. And then for your second, you decide-

HILARY DUFF: But it wasn't a C-section. Right. Not a C-section. A fully-medicated,

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: vaginal birth. Yes, yes, sorry. At the hospital. And then you decide for the next one, I want to be there. I want to be present. I want to feel it. And you decide to have a totally unmedicated birth at home. And then you did it again. And then the fourth. So was the plan just rinse and repeat?

HILARY DUFF: With number four? Yeah. Yeah. I mean, I had my same birth team pretty much. And, you know, there's always that like fear. When anything's like unknown, it's scary but exciting. And I know that I loved both, well, before this one, I loved both my home birth experiences. So I just knew that, you know, that's how I do it now. And, you know, there's just something about a home birth that is magical. And I don't really know how to put it. There's just something about like a bustling house, getting ready to like welcome your new family member that just strikes a chord with me and makes me really excited to feel safe and to climb into my bed afterwards and, you know, have all the love and the support of my midwives and my husband and whoever

HILARY DUFF: else I want there, you know?

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I know a little bit. I can't say it from the birther perspective, but from a couple of perspectives, one is a doula as a birth worker. There's no way to describe the difference between giving birth in and outside of a hospital. Both wonderful choices, but just one example, in the hospital, you're always asking for permission to do things. Can I eat this? Can I drink this? Can I go pee? Can I wear this? And at home, it's just your environment, you know? If anybody's asking anything, they're like, Hey, Hillary, can we use this towel? You know?

HILARY DUFF: Yeah. Yeah. There was no time this time around, as you can imagine, for anybody to speak to each other. There was quick. It was so quick.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: All right. Let's talk about that. How did it start?

HILARY DUFF: Okay. So talking about my impatience, I was also, let's just talk about this when it's your fourth baby, everywhere you go. First of all, you're huge. I was huge, still feel huge. My body was like, oh yeah, we know what to do. We got this like from a week and a half to two weeks pregnant, not a single thing in my closet fit.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, wow.

HILARY DUFF: Also, I went on my sourdough journey during this time, built a starter and just was making sourdough every day. So that probably contributed a little bit, but like everywhere you go, people are like, there's no way you're making it to term. There's no way you're making it 40 weeks. Lo and behold, for the fourth time around, I made it past 40 weeks.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, no kidding. Okay. And you were so uncomfortable the way you described it.

HILARY DUFF: So uncomfortable. Moving was so hard. So I get to 40 weeks. I am like, I can't believe this is happening. On 40 weeks and three days, I call my midwife, Beth, and I'm like, you're going to break my water. I'm like every day, I'm like, can I have another sweep? Can I have another this? Can I have it? And she's just like, this process is going to happen. The time is the right time. Like, do you know all the jargon of the midwife who's like, let it come, let it happen when it's happening. And that's just not for me at the end when I'm uncomfortable. I'm like, so I come up with this plan and I'm like, I'm getting this baby out. I can't do it anymore. And I wake up. I do the miles circuit. Do you know the mile circuit?

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I'm familiar, but share with the audience.

HILARY DUFF: Okay. So it's like a 90 minute exercise. You hold three or four stretches for 30 minutes each. And basically it unlaudges the baby from your like pelvic area,

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: dislodges, unlaudges.

HILARY DUFF: I'm still working with half a brain. Dislodges.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: They all work.

HILARY DUFF: Super uncomfortable. And you hold that for 30 minutes and then you do another pose that kind of like encourages her back into the birth canal zone. You know, they could have their neck twisted or whatever. This like gets them in the right positioning. Then you do all these other things. It takes 90 minutes. So after that, I got acupuncture. All the places that they normally avoid. Then I head on over to Beth and I'm like, get handsy with me, girl, let's go. And I make her give me like an aggressive sweep. And I cry and she cries because she hates doing that. And for the audience, if you don't know what a sweep is, it's like the sweeping of the membrane, which is just kind of like disrupting the cervix, right?

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Well, it's the bag of fluid. So actually the cervix has to be opened just a little bit. And then she reaches through the birth canal to the other side, basically inside the womb. And you can feel the bag of fluid and you just like jostle it. You just kind of sweep it a little bit, scratch it. And irritated is the goal.

HILARY DUFF: Yeah. So she did that. And it was painful. It does not feel good. And she doesn't like doing it. And obviously I don't like getting it done, but I was like, do it. And then I came home. I drank the witch's brew, the midwives brew, which is castor oil, almond butter, lemon verbena tea and apricot juice.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Are you an apricot or an apricot person? I never know how to say it the right way.

HILARY DUFF: I'm an apricot.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I don't think there's a wrong way.

HILARY DUFF: I get shamed by however someone says it. They're like, you say apricot. Apricot, apricot. So I drink it. And then every hour I pumped for 20 minutes for three hours.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Got it?

HILARY DUFF: Yeah, totally. So I only pumped three times, but. Three times for 20 minutes each once an hour. Yes. Then with apricots. I'm like bouncing on the ball and I'm like watching a show. And by this point, I am exhausted. No sex.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, no. There was no sex happening. It's like the only thing you left out.

HILARY DUFF: No. And anytime anyone mentioned sex to me, I was like, you can go get out of here. Absolutely not. You can go sex yourself. Sex yourself. Yeah. I was not interested in sex at all. I mean, I felt like I was doing so much and so much was happening inside of my body that I was like, first of all, I'm not enjoying this. I don't like my body like this. And so I'm not going to do one other thing for one other person that I have to. Even though everyone was like, this will help you. This will help you. I'm like, this is what got me into this situation in the first place. No.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Right. Interesting. You're like midwife. Get in there and scratch me.

HILARY DUFF: Yes.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Husband, stay away. Yeah.

HILARY DUFF: It makes no sense, but that's how I felt. And I was like, I'm just going to live my truth right now.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah. OK, good. Each person has their.

HILARY DUFF: Plus, I think Matt's pretty scared of me at this point in time. He's just like tiptoeing around like if one more person text me or said to me like, oh, it's going to be any day now. Oh, you're so close. I was going to rip their head off. Like I had to like tell Matt he'd be like, well, you're there, you're there. And I was like, hey, I love you so much. Can we please change the dialogue around? Like you're right there because we actually don't know. Like it could be two more weeks. And for some reason, it's really triggering to me. So can you just be like, hey, every time I complain, you just need to be like, you're doing such a great job. That's all I need to hear that I'm doing a good job. And I could like cry right now

HILARY DUFF: because I was just in a bad spot. And I feel like most pregnant women at that stage are. It's super common. Just tell your partner they're crushing it and doing a good job.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I mean, that is such incredible advice, honestly, because I think also men in particular want to fix it. When we see uncomfortable and we can't. So that's such a good advice. Thank you. Let's take a quick break. Welcome back. We're talking to Hillary Duff. And before the break, you were telling us how you were feeling at 40 weeks and three days pregnant with your fourth baby.

HILARY DUFF: Yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: You sound like you were physically and mentally miserable.

HILARY DUFF: I was, I think maybe the most miserable I've ever been in my life. Well, yeah, I wouldn't say I was like depressed, but I was just like, I felt super buried. I was like, I know this is coming to an end, but it just the hours in the day and then not being able to sleep on top of it was totally miserable. So I was up all night. I was up all day. It was just like a psycho moment in time anyway. So I did all of that and nothing was happening. And of course, I was getting lots of contractions, but I'd had pretty intense Braxton Hicks for months, but they would never obviously go anywhere. So I text Beth and she's like, hey, we're all kind of standing by. We're at my office. We're going to go get some dinner or do whatever they were going to do.

HILARY DUFF: I'm like, yeah, no worries. Matt was so sweet. He took the girls out to get their nails done into the park and to pick us up dinner and at the nail salon, he's like, wow, that was $600. I think the ladies at the nail salon were like, do you want a massage? Do you want calisthenics? All the add-ons. He's like, I sat down and all of a sudden I started getting all this stuff. He's never had a pedicure before and they kept asking the girls. They had like designs on their nails. They had paraffin wax that he's like, that was $600 trip to that. I was laughing. I thought that was so funny.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: My wife always makes fun of me. She's like, you went for the callous removal for an extra $25. I'm like, baby, you should have seen that callous. It was a bargain.

HILARY DUFF: Honestly, Matt's feet have never been so soft. I think they're softer than mine right now still.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, worth every penny.

HILARY DUFF: So I did, of course, going back to my like hippy dippy tendencies since nothing was happening, I kind of just surrendered. I threw some tarot cards that I really like. Not that I really, truly believe in tarot cards, but sometimes it's just like a nice, gets you a little spiritual. This one is the deck that I used. It's called Sacred Rebels Oracle. I really like it. It has a little book that goes along with like the cards and just like encouraging. And I'm sure it relates to everybody's life in some way, but in the moment, it felt good to me. And I just was like, okay, it's not happening. And I just got really like, cool, I've done everything I could today. It's not the day. Whatever, I'm going to get in bed. I'm so tired.

HILARY DUFF: Of course, I didn't get in bed. I went downstairs and made I think zucchini bread for banks and the girls came home. We put them to bed. We got in bed by like 940 or something like that. And by 1015, I like rolled onto all fours and had the most monster contraction of all time. And Matt looked at me and was like, whoa. He's like, I just took melatonin. I was like, I just took a unisom.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, boy. Oh, wow. Okay. But monster, how? Monster, long monster, painful monster.

HILARY DUFF: Monster, painful. Okay.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Where?

HILARY DUFF: Where on my body.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah. Where did you feel it?

HILARY DUFF: Like lower under my back, from my back wrapping around like a real contraction. And I was like, okay, that was different. And within five minutes, Matt was like, we need a time to use. This is different. And I'm like, yeah, this is different. But the week before, I had had all the midwives come over because I was having contractions every few minutes. So we had like a dress rehearsal and I felt so bad about the dress rehearsal because I just don't like people making a fuss over me and everybody came and it was like Saturday night and they're like, this is our job. This is what we do. And I just had like extreme guilt and like almost embarrassment for this being my fourth pregnancy and thinking it was like go time and it wasn't.

HILARY DUFF: And like the tub was set up and like we ordered everyone sugar fish and like I'm, you know, trying to sit. I never knew this but sitting backwards on a toilet is like really brings on those contractions for whatever reason that angle is like crazy. So my contractions were coming in and then they weren't going anywhere.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And I think it's a combination of the angle and the Pavlovian response of just sitting on the toilet and everything opening up.

HILARY DUFF: Well, it was, it definitely was and then nothing and I was like, this sucks. I was so bummed. But then this time around he was timing my contractions and they were every two minutes and they were long. Right away they were like a minute and some change like a minute and 15 seconds, a minute and 20 seconds, a minute and 10 seconds. And finally at like 10, 15, I called Beth who was my midwife and I was like, at this point I'm like shaking. Like my voice was like this and that always happens to me like when I'm in transition. So I was like, am I in transition already, Beth? Like what's happening? And she's like, Hilary Duff, why are you just now calling me? What's happening to you? And I'm like, I think you need to get here.

HILARY DUFF: I'm definitely in labor and she's like, okay, I'm going to hop in the shower and I'm like, okay. She was like, no, no, I'm not hopping in the shower. I'm popping in the car. And they all got here within, I don't know, 40 minutes or so. Matt is like taking the shower head off my shower, attaching the hose. At this point he's talked to one of my midwives, Julie, and she's explaining how to get the lining in the birthing tub. And she's like, we don't do creases in the birthing tub, Matt. So you get all the creases out. So she doesn't have to deal with that. So he has meticulously put the liner in the birthing tub. And I'm just downstairs, laboring by myself. My assistant and dear friend, Lauren, is the first to arrive.

HILARY DUFF: She had just had dinner with us and I called her and I was like, can you come back? I think Matt might need help. I don't know if my midwives are going to make it. She's like, oh, dear God. We've joked about this so many times of her delivering our baby. And she's like, yeah, I got it. I can do it. And then on the day, she's like, I don't think I could do it. But she was the first one to arrive and I'm like sitting on the floor, like hugging a chair in my entryway. And I can barely like get sentences out at this point. Oh, all my midwives arrived at the same time. They all came from different places. Like one came from Redondo Beach. One came from Sherman Oaks. One came from somewhere else kind of close by. And for some reason,

HILARY DUFF: they all got here at the same time. And they fly through the door like hocus pocus. Just ready to get down to business. And they head upstairs, which is where I first usually in my bathroom. And they're setting up. And Matt comes downstairs to be with me for a second. And I'm hanging on to him. I'm like hanging on to his shoulders. And I'm just there. Like there was no lead up time to anything. I'm fully like minutes away, you know? And my water breaks like a movie scene. I've never had that before.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, the big gush?

HILARY DUFF: The big gush.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: In your bathroom?

HILARY DUFF: No, in my entryway of my house downstairs.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, you were still downstairs. Was it relieving?

HILARY DUFF: Yes, but I was out of my mind. So it took a second for me to realize like what happened. But it didn't take Matt a second to realize what happened. And he like jumped back like my shoes. And then I was like, whoa, that was cool. I mean, it sounded like two gallons of water hit the ground, you know? The midwives upstairs heard it. Beth and Julie were upstairs. Jen's downstairs with me. And she's just, I hear her go. She's taking notes of everything. And I hear her go, water. And they're already like flying down the stairs with pads. And they're like, oh, we know. And they basically like think I'm about to have the baby like right there. And I was not down to have the baby outside of water. So I hoof it up the stairs.

HILARY DUFF: I'm like, go, go, go, go, go. Climb up the stairs. Get to the top. I have a big boy contraction. I'm hanging onto the banister. And I looked to Jen and I'm like, I can feel this four more times. I've got four more times than me. That's it. And she's like, okay, well, then let's go four more times. And I get to the tub. For some reason, getting in the bathtub was harder than getting up those stairs. It was just like, I don't know. It was really hard. I had maybe two, maybe, maybe three contractions in the water. And then her head was like barreling through my body.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Wow.

HILARY DUFF: And then it was one push. Her head was out. And then I didn't get a contraction for two and a half minutes.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: So her head's just out of you in the water?

HILARY DUFF: Her head's out of me in the water. Matt's thinking that she's drowning because he forgets that like they don't take a breath in the water until they come out of the water. And he, it's so funny to go back and look at the video because he's looking at Beth. And Beth obviously is just watching like she has her gloves on. I'm staring at her like, where's my contraction? Also, this was my biggest baby and getting her head out was so hard. I've never screamed before in birth and I was like pretty, pretty animal like to get that head out. Like May's birth was almost completely silent and I like sneakily birthed her myself. And this was not that at all. This was so fast and furious. And so the head is out. Matt's like, when are you going

HILARY DUFF: to pull her out? And Beth's like, it's all good. But two and a half minutes waiting for a contraction when your contractions have been like every minute feels insane. You're like, please, please, please. Where's the power to push? So finally I start to feel it and two more big pushes and her body was out and it was over. So that was at 12.05. So the midwives got here at like 11.30 and at 12.05 she was out.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Wow, so I mean, that's very fast. That was our fourth birth experience also. The midwives were there for maybe 35 minutes. This is very quick. What does it feel like?

HILARY DUFF: I mean, I had like playlists. I wanted like flowers in the birthing tub this time, which I had never done. A playlist. All you need is a single.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: All you need was a single. Um, what does it feel like to have a baby partially out of you for two and a half minutes? Is there pain?

HILARY DUFF: Not good. It didn't feel good. I mean, there was a sense of relief that like the head. I remember looking at Beth and I was like, that's the biggest part, right? That's the biggest part. She was like, you're almost there. I wanted her so bad to be like, yes, that was the biggest, hardest part. She would not say it. And I was like, oh, but the advice, you're doing great. You're doing amazing. You're doing wonderful.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah. Yeah.

HILARY DUFF: The shoulders are bigger. Her shoulders were an inch bigger.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Wow. How big was she?

HILARY DUFF: She was eight thirteen.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I know.

HILARY DUFF: So I did tear and you know, I've never had like a tremendous tear. Maybe Luca being the biggest one in the hospital. And then with Banks, I tore a little bit and I got stitches. And with May, she was like my most peaceful birth where I wasn't like pushing, you know, they always say this very annoying term where they're like, breathe the baby down. Breathe the baby down. And you're like, go take a walk. Breathe my baby down. Give me a break. I'm like having these feelings of like, you have to push, blah, blah, blah. Anyway, that was my one birth where I was like, oh, I'm really calm. I know what's happening to me. I can feel her moving down into my birth canal. And like it was slow. It was calm, whatever. So I tore a little bit with her,

HILARY DUFF: but I chose not to get stitched up. And that was totally fine. And with this one, I was like, glad I tore because I was like, this is my last baby. And I wanted her to just kind of get me back.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, already putting her to work.

HILARY DUFF: What do you mean? She didn't have to do while she did. I don't like to say it like that. The babies have to work very hard too. It's a joint effort. I think it's a little harder for me.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I bet that's true.

HILARY DUFF: Do you?

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah.

HILARY DUFF: The thing that I didn't really think about this time around when I was threatening to go to the hospital and have, you know, a medicated birth was that once you get the pitocin, the babies don't get a break from being squeezed. And that makes me sad to think about.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Right. So they're stronger, longer, more frequent. And also the pitocin doesn't have the oxytocin feel good effect on your brain that also travels to the baby. So does that travel to the baby? Yeah. There's an intensity that's offset by this hormone that's a feel good hormone that magnifies things that feel good versus adrenaline which magnifies things that might be danger, like pain. So the perception of the brain under the influence of adrenaline is a lot more intensity than is happening at the scene. And with oxytocin, it's the opposite. Things that might feel good or pleasurable or happy become magnified. But oxytocin synthetic pitocin doesn't do that to you. You just get the contractions. You don't get the feel good element.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Again, I've been doing this for so long at birth for a long time, talking to people about birth for a long time. It never gets old. And you're such a good storyteller. I mean, you bring us into it like we're in the room with you. Like I felt like my shoes, I'm going to go have to change my shoes. After your water broke, you're so good. Congratulations. You have the most interesting names for your kids. Where does Towns come from?

HILARY DUFF: You know, Towns has been on, we've had a short running list ever since we had Banks. And Towns has been on that list for a long time. I'm a real like last name giver for girls just because I think it feels like strong and Banks is, you know, a last name. And I've always loved the name Ford. Matt was never so on board with Ford. And then Towns came about and it was not really from anything. A lot of people are like, oh, Towns Van Zandt. And I don't know too much about Towns Van Zandt, but obviously I know his name and I know where he came from and stuff. So I guess maybe that's the only place I've heard that name, but just liking the sound of it.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah, I mean, they're sweet and you don't bump into a whole bunch of them. You know, they have a lot of character. That's it for part one of my lovely conversation with this mom of four. Stay tuned for part two where we talk about hands-on parenting, maintaining a healthy marriage, and what's coming next for the creative force that is Hilary Duff. Thanks for listening to the informed pregnancy podcast. For more pregnancy and parenting information, visit us online at informedpregnancy.com.

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