Motherhood from 15 to 40 with Natalie Parlett

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IN THIS EPISODE

Natalie Parlett became a mother at 15 — of twins. Now a functional nutritional therapy practitioner, personal trainer, gym owner, mother of six, and grandmother, she joins Dr. Elliot Berlin, DC to trace a motherhood journey that spans from age 15 to 40.

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. Buckle up. We have a lot to cover in this episode. My guest today is a functional nutritional therapy practitioner, personal trainer, gym owner, and mother of six and grandmother. There is so much to talk about. Natalie Parlett, welcome to the podcast. Thank you. Thank you for having me, Dr. Berlin. It's a pleasure and an honor. And there's so many things that I think we're going to talk about now that we haven't really talked about before, even though there's over 400 episodes. So thanks for bringing your story and being an open buck. I feel like I can ask you

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: anything and I will try my best not to hold back. Great. All right. Let's start at the beginning. Where are you from originally? I am from Oregon. Okay. Sounds like everything in Oregon is fairly small town. Yeah. I am from a small town in Oregon. Yeah. Kaiser, Oregon.

NATALIE PARLETT: Like how many people? Gosh, I couldn't tell you. I mean, it's probably grown since

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I've been there. Like for a small town, I'm trying to picture just a couple of stoplights

NATALIE PARLETT: or like- No, no, no, no. Oh, a town, but just- Yeah, yeah, yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Okay. A Walmart?

NATALIE PARLETT: No, no Walmart.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, okay. Now you're helping me gauge how big this town is.

NATALIE PARLETT: At the time, no Walmart, but there might be one now.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: So you had a drive for the Walmart.

NATALIE PARLETT: Yeah, yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Okay. So probably just a bunch of churches and a gas station.

NATALIE PARLETT: Yeah. A couple of grocery stores.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Awesome. Okay. So that's your upbringing. What was it like growing up in that setting for you?

NATALIE PARLETT: It was good in that everybody kind of knew each other and at times challenging because everybody knew each other.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yes, I can see that going both ways.

NATALIE PARLETT: Yes. Yes, definitely.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Is it one of those towns where like when they say it takes a village that there really is village, like not just know each other, but help each other out or just in your business?

NATALIE PARLETT: No, I don't feel like it was small enough for it to be like that.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah. Okay. All right. And do you have siblings?

NATALIE PARLETT: I do. I'm the youngest of four.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, wow. Okay. I'm going to just jump right into it. It didn't take long for you to get pregnant the first time.

NATALIE PARLETT: Okay. It did not.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: How old were you when you found out you were pregnant?

NATALIE PARLETT: I was 15 when I found out.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Okay. 15 and not living at home.

NATALIE PARLETT: I was not living at home.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Let's start with that.

NATALIE PARLETT: So this is kind of the funny, not funny part of the story is that I got sent away when I was 15 and a lot of people hear this story and we kind of gloss over it and it's like, oh, your parents sent you away because you were pregnant, but that's actually not what happened. And I think

it's important to emphasize. I did not get sent away because I was pregnant. My parents are not barbarians, but I was sent away to like a teen home because my parents were trying to get me away from my boyfriend who I got pregnant.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Okay. So did they just not like him? Did they not like the idea that you had a boyfriend?

NATALIE PARLETT: Kind of all of the above. I grew up in a Christian family and I just feel like back then, this was 41 years ago, things were a little different and they really didn't like how close we were getting. Obviously if I got pregnant.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Right. That takes a level of closeness.

NATALIE PARLETT: Yeah. And they were scared. And now being a parent of a teen and adult children, I can empathize with where they were at.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Right. So I'm going to say this as a dad of four kids and a bunch of teenagers, you know, the idea is terrifying to me. And I just wonder how you even started down that path because Christian parents don't usually like to send you away when you're 15.

NATALIE PARLETT: No, but during that time period, I don't want to say it was popular, but there were these homes popping up and I feel like they played on the emotions of parents. Like we can help your child and this is your only option.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Okay. So is the home Christian run? It was. Yeah. Okay. And you're in high school. I'm in high school. I got pulled out of high school. And is this instead of high school or you're supposed to do high school?

NATALIE PARLETT: You do school there. Yeah. There was kids from like all different places and some of them had to do like correspondence, like homeschool and others could like go to the local school. But this was the place of Texas that I got to.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: You're the youngest of four, right? So did any of the others get sent away?

NATALIE PARLETT: No. And I feel like there was more focus on me because I was the youngest and I was the last one home. So my sister is 15 years older. She was out of the house for a long time. My brothers were in college and then there's just me. And so all the focus got shifted to me, unfortunately. And yeah, my parents just felt like I was going down a bad path.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Well, whether they were right or wrong, I'm not going to judge that. Let's explore that. But also, you know, with my kids rapidly, one after another moving out of the house, I feel like that last one, I'm never going to let them leave the house. Almost the opposite. I want to anchor them down forever and stop growing older. But still, your parents, they felt like you were down a bad path. Were you down a bad path in your mind?

NATALIE PARLETT: No.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: What's a bad path? Is it rebellious against like a rebellious path?

NATALIE PARLETT: Yeah, that's what they felt.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: So in what ways were you rebelling?

NATALIE PARLETT: I was having sex with my boyfriend.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Right. That's evident. Are there things like alcohol and drugs?

NATALIE PARLETT: No. I mean, a lot of the kids at the home had been fresh out of rehab. And so I would say that's probably the more popular reason to send your child to one of these places. But did you become sexually active as a rebellious act or just sort of came about naturally? I think it just came about naturally. And, you know, I was 15 and making dumb choices. And yeah, I mean, who's to say why a kid does that? At the time, did you know about protection? I did. And this is also kind of the funny not funny part. When I found out my parents were sending me away, it was like, I'm never going to see you again. And we just completely didn't think about that part of it.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, to your boyfriend?

NATALIE PARLETT: Yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, it was just a moment of passion. So you had been using protection.

NATALIE PARLETT: That was the exception. Yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Got it. Okay. And then how far away is away? Texas. So from Oregon to Texas. Oh, wow. It's away.

NATALIE PARLETT: It's away.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: What was the home like?

NATALIE PARLETT: It was interesting. I think there were a lot of people there that had really good intentions. And I made lifelong friends. There's people I still talk to from there. There was different houses that you were in depending on what your needs were. So there was different houses for girls that could go to the public school. And then there was a house for the girls who could not go to the public school for whatever reason. Like they couldn't be trusted to go to the school. They wouldn't run away, unfortunately. I was put into that house because my credits didn't line up with the local school. So they're like, well, it's towards the end of the year we're going to put you in this house. So we were stuck doing homeschool.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, wow. And stuck doing homeschool with people who were more of a flight risk.

NATALIE PARLETT: Yes. So I made some very interesting friends. They'll know them, love them. They're great. Just a bunch of kids. How soon after you moved there did you find out you were pregnant? It was I think like two to three weeks. It wasn't that long. I was there long enough, but it wasn't that long. It was a routine physical that they took me to. And I didn't even know that they were doing a pregnancy test. It was just part of it. So I was pretty shocked.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: You didn't know they had tested. But at that point, hadn't you missed a period? I know it was a while back, but.

NATALIE PARLETT: Well, when you're 15, you're not tracking. And 41 years ago we really didn't track and there was no cell phones. So it just kind of came when it came like once a month or so and you don't really pay attention. And I mean, I was pretty stressed out because I had just, you know, moved to a new place and. That reminds me, I forgot to ask were you mad at your parents? I was heartbroken. I think mad came later. But when you're in that moment, it's it's heartbreak. And I saw it in a lot of kids around me. Like it's sad. And I'm an adult now and I can forgive my parents. But yeah, at the time it was heartbreaking.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I mean, also that many years back, not a whole lot of means of communication used to be the boyfriend or the parents.

NATALIE PARLETT: Well, and you're not allowed when you get put into these homes, you're not allowed to speak to anyone until you get to a certain level, they call it. So you have to like work through the system and then you can write letters and whatnot and you get a once a week phone call with family. But definitely not boyfriend because they were trying to get me away from the boyfriend.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Totally. OK, so you find out you're pregnant and do you remember how far into the pregnancy you were when you were?

NATALIE PARLETT: I think I was about. Yeah, I was probably about four weeks. Yeah, I think I was about four weeks. And then I was a little hazy on my dates. So then they tried to get me into an ultrasound right away. And I think we can confirm it was about four weeks when I found out. And then another surprise. Yeah, and I actually didn't find out until I was 10 weeks that it was twins.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Wow. OK, so take me through the emotion of these surprises, finding out that they did a pregnancy test, finding out that you're pregnant, finding out that it's twins. What was it like and being 15?

NATALIE PARLETT: OK, so when I was at the doctor's appointment, I just remember my house mom, we called him, was with me and she was checking with one of the nurses to see if we could leave because I had done all the things. And I had overheard her say, she wasn't speaking to me, but she said something about a possible pregnancy. And as soon as I heard that, it hit me that that was my reality. And I got lightheaded and I remember just leaning against the wall behind me and trying to steady myself. And then a doctor called me back into a room and said I was pregnant. And I said, are you sure? He said, yeah, we're very clear that you're pregnant. My hormones were probably, you know, HCG was probably at a really high level given I was twins.

NATALIE PARLETT: So that was the first shock. And this just like gives you insight to what a young girl is thinking. But I immediately thought about my grandparents and I'm like, what are my grandparents going to think? You're like thinking about all the people you're disappointing. I think at that point, I had probably developed some anger towards my parents because my first thought wasn't my parents. It was my parents were already disappointed in me, obviously. But like, what are my grandparents going to think?

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Interesting. Okay.

NATALIE PARLETT: Did you tell them? The counselors gave me the choice whether or not to tell my parents. And again, this was probably a little bit of the anger speaking. I was like, you can tell them. So I didn't tell my parents. I let them tell my parents because I was probably scared but also angry. Yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: So you didn't get the reaction.

NATALIE PARLETT: Yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: What was the first time you spoke to them after that or connected with them?

NATALIE PARLETT: Um, I can't remember our first phone call after that. But there was a lot of really hard phone calls after that, I can tell you. I just remember sitting in the counselor's office laying actually because I was, you know, just kind of beat from the news and her asking me, you know, what I wanted to do. And it's like, I don't want to talk to my parents. So eventually we talked, of course, we talked throughout pregnancy, but I couldn't do it right away.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: All right. Finding out it was twins is always, I think, a pretty big surprise for people. How is it?

NATALIE PARLETT: What's funny is people kept saying, I bet there's twins in there. And why in the world would you say that to a 15 year old? That didn't cross my mind. My mind was preoccupied to have intuition surrounding that. So at the ultrasound, when I found out, it was clear as day when he put the Doppler or the wand on my stomach and two little bodies popped up on the screen. And one of my house moms was with me and she was holding my hand and she was like giggling, laughing because it was like so shocking. And I think I was laughing and crying at the same time. Because like, what do you do with that?

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Did you communicate the pregnancy or the twinness of the pregnancy to your boyfriend?

NATALIE PARLETT: That's a funny story. I, at that point, wasn't allowed to speak to him. So before we found out it was twins, I wasn't the one that told him it was twins, but I did tell him I was pregnant. And it was one of the weekends we had parents visiting and one of the girls, my friend that was in my house, was able to get her mom's cell phone. Her mom gave her her cell phone. She came to me and took me into the bathroom and said, call your boyfriend. So I called him and woke him up because it was hours difference back home. And said, I don't have time to talk, but I want to tell you I'm pregnant. And his reaction was similar to mine. Are you sure? Yes, I'm sure. I think I'm like a month long or however at that point. And that was it.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Well, this brings me to an interesting thought. I mean, is he also from a Christian family?

NATALIE PARLETT: Yes.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yes. Okay. So I assume in this home-

NATALIE PARLETT: We went to a private Christian school.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Okay. I assume in this home, like, you know, abortion wasn't being offered as an option. Also don't know if you would have wanted that or not.

NATALIE PARLETT: No, it's not something that ever crossed my mind. I and my brother's adopted and I know a lot of people who are adopted. So if anything that was on the table and it was on the table, it's something I weighed heavily throughout my pregnancy. And that was my big choice that I had to make and that was on me.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Well, I have a million other questions, but I'm going to have to move the story forward to otherwise whenever we get to the end of just this pregnancy and then there are five more. Let's take a quick break and we'll be right back. Welcome back. We are talking to Natalie Parlatt. And okay, first pregnancy, Christian school, private Christian school, two people somehow get pregnant and then you get sent off not knowing that you're pregnant to a home for troubled teenagers. And you find out you're pregnant and then you find out it's twins. What is prenatal care like in that setting?

NATALIE PARLETT: Well, you know, immediately I got put on a prenatal vitamin and my mom was pretty stressed because she was far away from me and her choice. Yeah, it was. I think she probably called the home I was in constantly making sure I was okay. And in her defense, at that point, they convinced her it was a good idea for me to stay there despite me being pregnant because they didn't normally have pregnant teens. I was the first one.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, okay.

NATALIE PARLETT: Should they have kept me there? Maybe not, but it is what it is.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: But you have access to regular health care.

NATALIE PARLETT: Yeah, yeah, I was seeing OB on a regular basis. Lots of ultrasounds, of course, because it's twins. I was in a home where our house moms were 21 to like 26 and none of them parents. So they did their best. Knowing what I know now about prenatal nutrition and prenatal care, it's a little hard for me to look back. I cringe, but they did their best and dietary wise, I survived. I had really bad morning sickness throughout pregnancy. I can't help but wonder had my nutrition been better would have helped because I know that keeping your protein intake high and balancing blood sugar, all of that helps. But I was 15 and they were young too.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Sure. How did the pregnancy progress?

NATALIE PARLETT: I had a few scares. I spotted off and on and would end up in the ER and everything was fine. It was just what my body did in that pregnancy. But when I was 24 and a half, almost 25 weeks, I started having contractions and I realized I was having contractions. They took me to one of my routine appointments, I believe. And the doctor had his hand on my stomach and he's like, do you know you're having contraction? And I was like, oh, I know what that feeling is, but I didn't know that was a contraction, right? Because I feel like a lot of first time moms don't really understand

what the tightening is until someone points it out. And I definitely didn't. Especially if it's not painful. Yeah, it wasn't painful, but I did have frequent

NATALIE PARLETT: brecks and hicks or contractions.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Wow, that's pretty early.

NATALIE PARLETT: It was really early, yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Were they, are they identical?

NATALIE PARLETT: Yeah, they are.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Okay. Were they sharing a sac or?

NATALIE PARLETT: They did not share a sac. They shared a placenta.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Okay.

NATALIE PARLETT: Yeah. So at that point I was sent to the hospital and, oh, cause he checked me and I was about 80% of based.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Wow. 25 weeks.

NATALIE PARLETT: Yeah. So they sent me to the hospital and it was a small hospital, a small town. And I was there for about a week before my cervix started changing more. I went from just a facing to then starting to dilate. So they put me in an ambulance to Dallas, to a big hospital.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, wow.

NATALIE PARLETT: Yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh my gosh. Again, I'm just thinking of 15 years old, surprise pregnancy, surprise twins, not surrounded by family at all. And now transporting to a bigger hospital because a small hospital is not sufficient. And, you know, two thirds through a pregnancy and a facing and dilating. My heart is beating like crazy right now. I can't imagine what that was like for you.

NATALIE PARLETT: It was scary. Yeah. I say it was scary now, but when you're in that situation, I don't think you have time to be scared. I was very much in survival mode, you know, being sent away, finding out I'm pregnant, and then now hospital, ambulance, like all of that. I was in survival mode and I was scared for my babies. I didn't want them to be born yet. I loved them and I just wanted them to be okay.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Had you been planning on a vaginal birth?

NATALIE PARLETT: Yeah. Yeah. Back then, so 25 years ago, it was more common to deliver twins vaginally than it is today. So I knew a C-section was possible depending on what happened, but I hoped that I would have a vaginal birth.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Did you end up getting a release from the hospital

NATALIE PARLETT: or were you there for the rest of the pregnancy? Rest of the pregnancy. So it was like 10-ish weeks. I was in the hospital on bed rest.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Wow. Like monitored the whole time? Like sort of like on a leash?

NATALIE PARLETT: Yeah. So they had me on medication that I don't think they use anymore, but it was Tributaline and they had a pump in my leg.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, yeah. We still use it.

NATALIE PARLETT: Yeah. So I was on it, what they call the Turb pump in my leg and they had to change it every few days and then they would monitor morning and night, the twins to make sure I wasn't having too many contractions and to make sure their heart rates were good.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah. So the Tributaline to keep the contractions like a relaxant for the musculoskeletal all your uterus. Yeah. But it also kind of makes you anxious now, like did it make your heart skip a lot?

NATALIE PARLETT: Yeah. It was funny because I was in bed and I was feeling like jittery and anxious, but I couldn't do anything with that energy, obviously. Or you can't go anywhere. You can't move around.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah. Wow.

NATALIE PARLETT: Yeah. I was allowed a wheelchair ride a day,

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: like 10 to 20 minutes. Exciting. At this point,

NATALIE PARLETT: any more contact with your mom, your parents? Yes. So at that point, when I got transported to Dallas, my parents are like, oh my gosh, these babies are coming. They came to Dallas. And then after it was probably a few days to a week, everything was stable and I was going to be there indefinitely. So my dad went home. He had to go back to work and my mom stayed with me in the hospital until I had them.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Wow. Okay. Like bonding time? Did you guys sort of?

NATALIE PARLETT: No, it was a good time for us. She was one of the few people who did not give me her opinion on what I should do.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, that's nice. Because then you were saying at the end right now, you're going to have these babies. And the question is the keyboard to give them up for adoption.

NATALIE PARLETT: Yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: What was that process like for you mentally?

NATALIE PARLETT: It was really painful. I did not want to give them up for adoption, but I also was their mom and wanted to do what was best for them. So just the thought of needing to make that choice and researching it was really painful.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: How did you make the ultimate decision?

NATALIE PARLETT: You know, it's hard to say exactly, but I knew I couldn't live my life having given them up. And I felt like I needed them as much as they needed me.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Well, was their dad involved in the decision making at all?

NATALIE PARLETT: So he was supposed to be involved. And, you know, he was at that point 16 turning 17 year old boy, and he wasn't ready to be a parent. And I understand that. I understand why a lot of people wanted me to give them up because they didn't know what I was capable of and that I was capable of loving taking care of my sons as well as anyone else or better. So he wasn't keen on me keeping them, but he quickly realized it was for the best after I had them.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Wow. I hope people buckled up at the beginning of this podcast. We're on a ride. How was the birth?

NATALIE PARLETT: As far as hospital births go and being incredibly medicalized, that's a word. It went great. The day I had them, I was 35 weeks and-

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, wow. You really made it. I mean it.

NATALIE PARLETT: Yeah. They saw that baby A's water was low. So they took me off the trip. They, I believe at that point started Pitocin and they're like, you're having these babies today. So baby A was head down and baby B was breach.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, wow. Okay. Which is not terribly uncommon.

NATALIE PARLETT: Yeah, it's not terrible. It's not uncommon, I mean, and depending on the doctor will still let you deliver vaginally. So the doctor, I'll never forget this, came in and he's like, okay, we're going to have some babies today. And at that point, I wasn't sure if they were going to let me do vaginal or not. And he just looked at me and he was like, you can do this. We got this. And, you know, it might have seemed small to him, but like that was 25 years ago and I will never forget his confidence in me and his ability to help you get them Earth side.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: So, oh, that's really special.

NATALIE PARLETT: Yeah, cause that could have gone differently. The doctor could have looked at me and then she's 15 years old now way. Let's cut them out. Yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Or just, you know, a whole spectrum of judgmental to supportive and, you know, it sounds like, it sounds like he was there for you just like as a mom.

NATALIE PARLETT: Yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: So it was labor long.

NATALIE PARLETT: So it wasn't that long. No, considering I probably got taken off everything, like the medications and then given pitocin like around 12 ish to one o'clock. And then they gave me an epidural. They said I needed to have an epidural just in case I needed to have a C-section, which I

understood cause, you know, twins you deliver in the OR. And it was around nine where they're like, okay, you're fully dilated 9 p.m. So I went back and it was honestly very simple and straightforward.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Did baby be turn or baby also come out?

NATALIE PARLETT: Yeah, baby. We came out Frank rich.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Okay. Wow. Okay. So on top of everything else also delivered twins also delivered a bridge baby pass. Why not add that to the resume?

NATALIE PARLETT: Yeah, why not?

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I really do have a million questions about what happened next in terms of raising these babies and continuing your schooling and, you know, and then like I mentioned earlier, a bunch more pregnancies, but maybe I can pivot because there's only so much time to the work that you do. You're a functional nutritional therapist and personal trainer and now you own a gym. What was the transition between the moment we just left and this career? So between having the twins and this career. I know that's a lot happened in there.

NATALIE PARLETT: Yeah, but they kind of go hand in hand because I was in the hospital with them for so long and I had really tremendous care and my nurses were so phenomenal that after that I was like, you know what? I could really see myself doing this one day. I had to put it put it on hold for a bit but when the twins were a few years old I started taking college courses because that was my intent was to go into nursing and eventually I pivoted from nursing because, you know, I have a lot of respect for nurses but given their schedule and the time away from family I just knew I couldn't do that personally and I was getting more into holistic care and natural lifestyle and I wanted to be on the health side of it not the sick side of it.

NATALIE PARLETT: I think it's very noble and amazing what nurses do but I knew that I needed to put my energy on the other side so that's when I got into nutrition. So really because of my boys and into personal training and it was not all at once it was many years in the making and now my husband and I own a gym together but it was over the course of many years.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Wow is quite a transformation. I feel like that starting point could have gone in many different directions and despite everything going on finding what you want, what's important to you and then pursuing it and then doing it, you know, getting there. Big kudos to you.

NATALIE PARLETT: Thank you.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I want to take another little break and when we come back we'll sort of zip forward towards the more recent births that you've had and what you've learned along the way and maybe how birth has changed for you. We'll be right back. And we're back with Nathalie Perlette and now you have a total of six children one of them just a month old. Congratulations. Your last couple of births were different than the birth of twins that we talked about and the earlier births the ones that followed that. You eventually switched to doing home birth. How did that come about?

NATALIE PARLETT: Yeah, so I have four boys in total and when I had my second two boys separately because they're not twins I started reading more about natural birth and I wasn't at a place

in my life I was still young, young 20s where I felt comfortable doing a home birth but I read, you know, Ina May's book and it clicked. It made sense. And I didn't know that I was going to have a whole nother family late in life but I always joke and say like in another life I would have been a midwife.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah, well it's not too late.

NATALIE PARLETT: Yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: You know, you do things. I guess we could fill in some of the blanks and say that you got together right and married the twins' dad.

NATALIE PARLETT: I did. I married him when they were about one years old.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And then you had more babies.

NATALIE PARLETT: And then we had more babies. There was some space there like a four-year gap and a three-year gap so not crazy close.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Right.

NATALIE PARLETT: So then together you had four boys. Boys, yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Okay. And then you separated. Yes, years later we separated. And then the last two are with your current partner.

NATALIE PARLETT: Yes. So I got remarried. My current husband had no children and never planned on having children. He was happy that I had four boys and he said, that's great. You know, I get to be a part of their life and I don't need to have kids of my own. And then I surprise got pregnant.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, you're good at that.

NATALIE PARLETT: Yeah. Well, I will say that two of my pregnancies, sorry, three have been planned.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Okay.

NATALIE PARLETT: And two have been surprises. I just got a two-for-one deal with the twins.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Understood. How old were you? Can I ask when you got pregnant with your fifth?

NATALIE PARLETT: Yeah, I was 36.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Which in my practice every day

NATALIE PARLETT: I'm just seeing people having their first at 36. Yeah, there was a 14-year gap. So it kind of felt like I was starting over.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah. Okay. So then your reading, you said about natural pregnancy and McGaskin's books and, you know, the appeal of midwifery, the midwiffic approach compared to the

medical model.

NATALIE PARLETT: Yes. And I already knew that I, you know, wanted natural birth. I had had an unmedicated birth with my last two boys and then with the surprise pregnancy with my current husband, it was the pandemic. And so, you know, it was a crazier time and I think harder to give birth in the hospital with not knowing if your spouse can come in. And it was a great time to jump into home birth. I'll say that.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah, it's when a lot of people made the leap.

NATALIE PARLETT: Yeah, yeah. And I probably would have either way, but that gave us the extra push.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: So did you see a midwife throughout the pregnancy?

NATALIE PARLETT: I did. Yeah. As soon as I found out, we started, you know, researching midwives, interviewed them, found our midwife, fell in love with her.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And how was the difference for you, just even before birth and pregnancy, the difference in the structure of the care?

NATALIE PARLETT: Oh, gosh. I mean, I'm sure you know this, but it's vastly different. You know, when you see an OB, you're in and out of the office, you know, quickly there with you for maybe five to 10 minutes. And with a midwife, she would sit with us for at least an hour.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: That's what they always say.

NATALIE PARLETT: I waited an hour to see my OB for five minutes, and I waited five minutes to see my midwife for an hour. Yeah, like it was phenomenal.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And I remember Dr. Stu Fishbein, who's pretty holistic once saying, I would have no idea what to talk to a pregnant woman about for an hour. Oh, yeah. He's like, you know, 10 minutes and I got nothing left, no material. And you know, he was very pro-midwife. He loves that.

NATALIE PARLETT: Yeah, yeah, I know who that is. So yeah, it's very different. You feel fully cared for or at least my midwife, I'm sure they're not all equal. She's always a text message away, a phone call away. There was times where she stopped by my house if I needed something. She was just amazing. Like the care was amazing. It's all my husband has ever known. So like when he hears stories about what it's like with an OB, he's just like, why would anyone do that?

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Did you prepare for the birth differently?

NATALIE PARLETT: So I wasn't physically active. This is funny. When I was in my young 20s and now I'm very physically active. So yeah, I prepared differently and I'm older. So I have more resources. And given what I do, I was able to see, you know, a chiropractor, a pelvic floor PT, keep working out in a way that I knew was safe and good for my body. So yeah, physically I prepared very different.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: How did the birth go? That first one, home birth.

NATALIE PARLETT: So I historically give birth fairly quick. Each one's gotten a little faster and this one was very fast. And I also have a lot of prodromal labor. So I had prodromal labor for probably three or four weeks and was just like waiting and waiting. And I thought I would go early with her, but I went three days over and my midwife and the midwife that attends with her. I said, you know, I'm having contractions. They decided to come hang out close by because they were concerned that I would wait too long to call them. And I'm so glad they came because it was really manageable. I had contractions all day and then my water broke and less than an hour she was born.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Wow. Okay. So a big lead up and then boom.

NATALIE PARLETT: Yeah. And the lead up was just like manageable. I don't know what I was dilated to and my water broke, but I'm pretty sure I flew through transition in like, it was like 54 minutes or something.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: On land and water?

NATALIE PARLETT: In water.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: She was a water birth, yeah. Was that your first water birth?

NATALIE PARLETT: It was my first water birth. I mean, I always loved being in water, her pain relief in general, like being in the shower, bath, whatever, but it was incredible to be in the water with her, especially because I spend so much time in the ocean in general and I had surfed through a lot of my pregnancy and it just felt very natural to be in water with her.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Did postpartum feel different after the home birth?

NATALIE PARLETT: Yes, mainly because I knew more. I know more now than I did when I was basically a kid and I followed the first 40 days concept of resting, nourishment. Yes. I mean, really prepared for postpartum as much or more than the birth because I tended towards when I was younger with my boys to having postpartum depression and that was one of my big concerns and my midwife was like, you know, you might surprise yourself this time and you're preparing for it and she was right. Mentally, I felt great and she was a challenging baby so I should have had a harder time but because I was really cared for and my team.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I love that your midwife said that too, each one is its own chapter. It could be a totally different narrative.

NATALIE PARLETT: Oh, yes.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: You don't have to just accept that it's going to be as it was.

NATALIE PARLETT: Yeah, that's really, really great wisdom and she has kept reminding me that since she's met me.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: What gap is there between number five and number six?

NATALIE PARLETT: What happens is, so we had our first girl, surprise girl, we didn't find out gender so we had a little girl and that little girl started asking for a sister.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, okay.

NATALIE PARLETT: Young, she was probably two. She's been able to speak since she was one years old and she started talking about a sister and I'm like, gosh, is this an imaginary friend? Like who is the sister she's talking about? And then she started asking her dad. We thought we were done. We're like, okay, that's good. She was kind of a challenging baby, still a challenge and we're like, no, we're good. We're old, let's call it good and eventually I just started feeling like we're not done. She knows something we don't know and my husband was like, yeah, I don't want to be the reason that she doesn't have a sibling. Whatever it is, boy or girl. So we decided to try for number six, the one I just had.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I guess it worked.

NATALIE PARLETT: It worked, yeah. I was preparing myself for about six months on prenatals and doing all the things, working with my pelvic floor therapist and making sure my body was sound and my nutrition was really sound. So maybe it was that, I don't know, but it doesn't hurt to prepare your body, I really believe in preparing.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Roll out the red carpet.

NATALIE PARLETT: So I got pregnant with her, another girl, so her sister was right and I'm not going to lie, this pregnancy was harder. It was a lot harder.

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

NATALIE PARLETT: I have a few theories. I was going on less sleep than my last one. I was my last, I didn't have a toddler to take care of and I could sleep any time of the day I wanted to and it was a pandemic so we were home for the most part and since my daughter, you know, we opened up a new business together. We're another baby.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah, right, another baby.

NATALIE PARLETT: So lack of sleep, stress of business, stress of life, you know, life happens and I just think it took its toll on me physically and emotionally and there was no major thing physically that happened, like from the outside looking in, I had a very healthy pregnancy but the fatigue and the nausea and the emotional impact was very real for me this time.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Similar birth?

NATALIE PARLETT: No.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, do tell what happened a month ago.

NATALIE PARLETT: So, you know, when you have quick births, you prepare for another quick birth and there was a part of me, you know, throughout pregnancy was like, what if this is a wild card? You know, I've always heard that there can be wild cards so we're preparing for another fast birth to the

point where, okay, if our birth team doesn't make it, like, do we know what to do and we are prepared for that. And about two weeks before I had her, she flipped breech and then transverse and it was a little scary because I was approaching 38 weeks. Yeah, I mean, you know that you can't have a breech baby at home legally and there's not many providers in hospital that will deliver breech so I really had to surrender to whatever was meant to be.

NATALIE PARLETT: We got her to go back down and stay back down. And then about four days prior to my due date, my water broke and we were, you know, quickly getting everything ready. My husband was rushing around the house preparing to deliver the baby himself but also like getting things ready because my midwife is about an hour away.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, wow.

NATALIE PARLETT: And last time when my water broke, I delivered less than an hour. So rushing around, got everything ready. First team comes. My three-year-old is, you know, just beside herself excited because she's been waiting for this moment. She is really, really into birth too and would reenact. Yeah, she would reenact birth with her stuffed animals throughout my pregnancy. So this was like the moment she'd been waiting for and it was just a slower labor. It was a wild card. Yeah. Which, you know, kind of messes with you if you're used to a quick labor and birth. And it really felt like full circle though and my midwife and I talked about it after and she said your last birth was more like a first birth, which felt symbolic.

NATALIE PARLETT: And like the whole labor and birth felt symbolic to my journey in motherhood and my intro into motherhood, which was very hard. This labor and birth was the hardest I've ever had to work. It was the hardest thing I've ever done, but also so beautiful because I have my daughter and, you know, it was birth and my twin's birth was not unlike that. You know, so from the time my water broke when she was born, it was nine and a half hours.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh my goodness. That's like 10 births.

NATALIE PARLETT: Yeah, it felt like it for me and I spent way longer in transition than I've ever been in transition. And my husband jokes that with my last one he wasn't needed, right? Because I delivered her into my own hands. You know, I did everything and he always says, you know, you could go off into the wilderness and deliver by yourself because that's just me and the other piece is that I'm usually silent in labor. Like the more painful it gets, the quieter I get. And with this one, I was roaring her into the world.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Wow.

NATALIE PARLETT: And it just felt like an out of body experience and even like looking back at the photos and the video and like, I don't know how he did that. Who is that? Who is that? And I feel that though when I look back at having twins at 15, like I don't honestly know how I did that either.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I always say mom can do anything. I mean it from the bottom of my heart. Of all the years of doing what I do, moms can do anything. Cause we're almost out of time a few rapid fire questions for you. How old were the twins?

NATALIE PARLETT: The twins, they just turned 25. 25th birthday was on my due date for my daughter. For this last one.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, wow. Congrats. You became a grandma. How old were you when you became grandma?

NATALIE PARLETT: I was 39. Yeah. My son and his wife, one of the twins, they have a little boy and now that little boy has an aunt that's barely older and an aunt that's younger.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, right. I was thinking about that. The aunt is younger than the nephew.

NATALIE PARLETT: I was actually babysitting. They were in town and I was babysitting him the night I went into labor. And I think it was like the concoction of oxytocin and good feelings.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, babies. Moving to labor. Okay. More rapid fire questions. How's your relationship with your parents?

NATALIE PARLETT: It's good. It's good. Yeah. I think being a parent myself, you will do anything if you think it'll help your child, whether it's misguided or not. And I can look back and see that they were just desperate to help me, even if it wasn't the right help. But I love my parents and our relationship is good now.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Having had your teen experience and now raised kids, passed teenager into adulthood and now gonna do it again. Any thoughts for parents on, you know, just from your perspective, what could be helpful in terms of keeping your kids close and, you know, when you go through those hard parts, how to navigate the choppy waters?

NATALIE PARLETT: Yeah. Listen more than you speak, especially when it's your first teen. I've had a few teens move through now. When it's your first teen, you're just like, you see them going down the wrong path and you just want to say all the things. And yeah, there are some things you should say, but you should also just listen. And that's what teens need more than anything. And not to have quick reactions, strong reactions, because those just push your kid away.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: That's really very good, solid advice.

NATALIE PARLETT: I have not done it right with all of them and I'm working on it still, but.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah, I was gonna say, I'm gonna go home and put that advice to use. I'm gonna have a house full of teenagers. So Natalie, I really appreciate you coming and sharing all these elements of such an interesting story from my perspective. But, you know, you've lived so much and you've emerged strong and I learned a lot from you. So thank you.

NATALIE PARLETT: Thank you for having me on.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Question, where can we find you online?

NATALIE PARLETT: You can find me. My Instagram is at Natalie Parlett. I don't have a lot on my website right now, but most of everything's on my Instagram, whether it's fitness. Nutritional, yeah. Yeah, all of that's all in one place.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Cool, we're all on the gram.

NATALIE PARLETT: Yeah, send me a message if you're on there. I get lots of questions from moms and I love answering questions.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: You might get some questions from at least this dad, aside from all the ones I just shot at you. Thank you again for joining me at home. Thanks for listening to the Informed Pregnancy podcast. For more pregnancy and parenting information just like this, visit us online at informedpregnancy.com.

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