# Innovation & Motherhood with Garrett Kusmierz

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IN THIS EPISODE

Garrett Kusmierz conceived on her first try — but her postpartum journey was anything but easy. She joins Dr. Elliot Berlin, DC to share how that experience pushed her to change careers and create innovative products for new parents, including a biodegradable postpartum bra.

***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:** My guest today conceived on her first try, but a traumatic birth led to a challenging postpartum journey, and the road didn't get any easier when she began trying for her second child. Her experiences inspired her to change careers and develop innovative products to support new parents. She's the host of the Cozy Cozy podcast and the creator of a biodegradable, disposable postpartum bra. Plus, she has an exciting update to share about her fertility journey. I'm pregnancy-focused chiropractor, Dr. Elliot Berlin, and you're listening to the Informed Pregnancy podcast. Garrett Kozmeyers, welcome to the podcast.

**GARRETT KUSMIERZ:** Thanks for having me.

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** I'm excited to learn from you. I mean, once in a while you bump into somebody who gets a bad hand of cards dealt to them, and not only picks themselves up, dusts themselves off, and tries again, but along the way tries to learn from what happened to them and help make sure it doesn't happen to other people, and you're one of those people. So let's jump into the journey. Where are you from, and what were you doing before the first baby came along?

**GARRETT KUSMIERZ:** Yeah, so I'm from the Midwest. I somehow, well, a real estate job brought me to the East Coast. It was supposed to be for one year, and I'm still here 10 years later. I was coaching, helping people with what started as fat loss, weight management, strength training, turned into mindset and more of a life coaching style of supporting people. I was writing books and podcasting, and I was very happy in that career. I wanted to change nothing about it, but as you

mentioned in the intro, once I had certain pain points that really, really disconnected me from my baby, I wanted to make a change.

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** Well, how do you get started? At one point do you say, I wanna help people in the ways that you were helping people before, like fat loss, coaching, any of those things. Those fields always make me scratch my head and say, when you were a kid, did you be like, I wanna help people lose fat?

**GARRETT KUSMIERZ:** I am kind of a teacher by nature. I'm a big sister. I'm the oldest child. I feel like I was always teaching my brother's things or mainly bossing them around, and out of pure passion for fitness, I was sharing my journey through blogs and Instagram posts, and I found myself sending more direct messages to followers about what was in my protein shake or how many reps I did of that thing that I posted in the gym earlier that a guy I was dating at the time was like, you should charge for what you're doing. Like you're spending time helping people put it into a structure and start guiding people for money. Like, don't just do this for free. And so I started that business in 2014 and it just evolved as people continued to ask

**GARRETT KUSMIERZ:** for whatever they were asking for, really. And that naturally led to other types of coaching. Yes, and that was very much informed from what I was also passionate about at the time and from the mentors that I had, taking me through spiritual journeys and my own life coaching experience.

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** And then writing books. I mean, that's a whole skillset of its own. You might be sort of a born leader and interesting and motivating, but writing is a whole different world. And then starting a podcast. What are the books about and what's a podcast about?

**GARRETT KUSMIERZ:** So the first book I wrote was just an e-book that was supposed to help my clients so that they could learn without me having to tell them in our sessions. The second one is a story based on my life. It's a novel form. I did study journalism and writing in college. My professor said I write like a downhill skier. So I am not a good writer. I'm a good storyteller. And so it took a lot of editing, three years of editing, over 300 pages. It's on Amazon. And what it's about is my journey moving from Chicago to Boston for a job. At the time I was in a victim mindset. I felt like the job was ruining my life. And as soon as I found my footing on the East Coast, the job fired me. I found out later that was because they had closed the deal

**GARRETT KUSMIERZ:** with my dad. And I was just in complete shock that I had kind of changed my life for this company that was using me. And I wrote a book about it. So it's kind of a crazy story.

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** Interesting. Okay, it makes sense that you studied it. But I've been told that I downhill ski like a terrible writer. I haven't been told that, but that's how I do feel about myself. Okay, moving forward. And then the podcast.

**GARRETT KUSMIERZ:** Yes, I was sick of writing actually. And that's why I wanted to start a podcast. The Cozy Cozy podcast.

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** What's the overall genre?

**GARRETT KUSMIERZ:** Right now we're filed under parenting and health and wellness. I think it's a secondary title. It started as a podcast called Dare to Move, which was the name of my book. And I was just interviewing people that I found inspiring, that had unique stories to tell, that had overcome obstacles and also using it as a place to solo cast that I could create content for my clients. And when I started the company, Cozy Cozy, I changed the name to Cozy Cozy podcast. And now we interview anyone in the birth space, anyone giving birth, all things birth and actually business as well. We interview a lot of mompreneurs.

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** Oh, that's great. These are all things that our listeners will be interested in. All right, so speaking of pregnancy and birth, you had a lot of success with your first try at having a baby in terms of conception. Where were you in life? And was it like a conscious choice?

**GARRETT KUSMIERZ:** Yes. Susan and I are both very health conscious people. I had been bodybuilding and powerlifting in the gym, building a lot of strength for the seven years before I conceived. I got off of an IUD about nine months before we tried. And I felt like I was really walking towards getting pregnant. And it was all based on this idea that we were gonna try the night of our wedding, but COVID happened and COVID canceled our wedding. And I looked at my husband and I said, if our wedding is really canceled, I want a puppy or a baby. And we were kidding because I'm allergic to dogs. So I was like, this is where this is going. And we ended up getting pregnant on what would have been the night of our wedding, which was really special.

**GARRETT KUSMIERZ:** But I used to tell my husband, I said, don't joke about how we're gonna get pregnant first try because we don't know. And there's a lot of people that are struggling right now. I don't think at the time the global rate was one in six struggle with infertility, but I'm sure it was somewhere not so positive. And so I didn't have that expectation, but then it happened. So it kind of took us by surprise, but we were excited. And I approached pregnancy like it was nothing. I ran, I sprinted, I lifted, I dead lifted 135 pounds the day I went into the hospital for an induction. Like it was the easiest thing I've ever done. And I really enjoyed being pregnant.

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** Wow, okay. That's an amazing story all by itself. In terms of conception, were you tracking your cycle? Because sometimes bodybuilders don't have regular cycles and with the IUD, sometimes that interferes with your cycle even after you take it out.

**GARRETT KUSMIERZ:** That's such a great question. I started tracking my ovulation in May. That was my plan. It was my grand plan to start tracking. And that month I had a 45 day cycle. So I didn't ever catch an ovulation. I was like, I don't know what's going on. And so then in June, I was like kind of tracking ovulation, but I wasn't really looking into exactly, the strips are kind of hard to determine sometimes. And so we were like, we think we got the window, but we're not sure. And then four days later, I had a traumatic event where my husband and I hit heads and my two front teeth fell out. And in that moment, it was cycle day 21, I started bleeding. And I was like, that's so strange. I'm not really sure what's happening, but I had a 21 day cycle.

**GARRETT KUSMIERZ:** And then about 15 days later, we conceived my son. So it was sorta, I didn't have tracking strips with me. I was at a dude ranch in Colorado. It felt like miraculous. Nature wanted this baby.

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** Did you get pregnant without two front teeth?

**GARRETT KUSMIERZ:** I had them in my head, but we weren't sure if my body was going to accept them or not. And then they did get accepted by my body. And this is actually a really interesting thing. Maybe you've even done a podcast on it, but I ended up doing root canals throughout my pregnancy, which the dentist wouldn't normally do, but it was the only way for me to keep my teeth. And what I found out the day flash forward, almost three years later, the day I started IVF treatment for an egg retrieval, I found out that those two root canals were infected.

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** Oh, you're kidding.

**GARRETT KUSMIERZ:** And that could have been one of the root causes of my infertility.

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** No way. Okay.

**GARRETT KUSMIERZ:** Isn't that crazy?

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** Well, this seems like an ideal place to take a break because I need to download all that information. We'll be right back. Welcome back. We are talking to Garrett Koesmeier. Okay, so bodybuilding, healthy. Your husband's healthy, but he's not your husband yet because there was a pandemic. And pregnant on the first try, essentially, despite unusual cycle patterns and not tracking, just the will, hey, we're gonna do it now. And it happened. I love that. And how was the pregnancy? I know you said it was fairly easy and that you were deadlifting on the day that you went to the hospital, which I think is pretty awesome. I hope you have pictures of that for us.

**GARRETT KUSMIERZ:** I do.

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** Awesome. How were the different stages of the pregnancy?

**GARRETT KUSMIERZ:** Yeah, my spiritual teacher at the time, call her my life coach, was almost like trying to shake me, like you are about to go through a transition. You are about to become a mother, like stop acting like this is no big deal, like really embrace this time. And it's not that I wasn't embracing it. I just felt so good. So when I was eight weeks, I was running, I think I did, in New Hampshire, it's all hills. You're committing to a hill run. Three miles of hill runs. I was doing chin-ups till I was 13 weeks pregnant. And I continued to feel good. The only, I guess, ailment that I had, this is very obscure, but I had these like little scab bumps on my scalp and I used some special shampoo. And then I also learned that I have a torn labrum

**GARRETT KUSMIERZ:** from years of cheerleading and gymnastics and power lifting, that my hip was giving me a lot of trouble, which is why I was actually seeing chiropractor and getting regular massages. And I just kept telling myself, when I give birth, this is what I'm gonna focus on, is really rehabbing my hip. Maybe I need surgery, I don't know. And I continued to just listen to my body. People found it hilarious because I'd be posting 39 weeks, doing jumping jacks and deep squats and back squats and all of these things, but it just really felt good. And what I didn't realize is that I was preparing myself for a four-day long birth. It was like I was training for the Ironman.

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** Wow, okay. So first trimester, did you have the typical nausea and low energy? I can't imagine you with low energy.

**GARRETT KUSMIERZ:** A little bit, a little bit. I would lay in bed a lot. I was just coaching and it was all on Zoom. So when I wasn't coaching or I taught some Zoom workout classes as well at the time, I would lay in bed. I remember that. And I do remember feeling nauseous, but nothing that like totally took me out.

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** And then it sounds like second and third trimester, back to your typical workouts, almost like, okay, me and the pump are gonna do what we used to do.

**GARRETT KUSMIERZ:** Yeah, all the way through. And I spent time at 26 to 27 weeks. I was out in Snowmass, Colorado and my grandma's house, six at 9,000 feet. And I'm used to living at about sea level. And I did 90 minute walks every day. And I still don't know how I did that.

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** I'm already out of breath just hearing your story.

**GARRETT KUSMIERZ:** Yeah, same.

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** All right. So what was the plan for birth? We know it didn't go according to plan, but what was your plan? What did you have in mind?

**GARRETT KUSMIERZ:** What I had in mind is as low intervention as possible. I hired a doula. I really loved her. She was also the one giving me my prenatal massages. She's a jack of all trades, sort of a person. And she said, look, you know, I want you to know that I will help support your birth plan. And should there be a point that you aren't able to surrender and an epidural can help you calm down, you know, I may suggest that. I may make suggestions throughout your birth. But one thing I think that's really important to note is the end of my pregnancy experience with certain OBs really put a lot of fear and judgment and discomfort around what I was walking into. And that was, I think, also very foreboding about what happened.

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** So you said more than one OB. So was it a group practice that you're with?

**GARRETT KUSMIERZ:** Yes, I got kind of the, I joke, I got the world tour because I started my pregnancy with a Boston-based OB. And then when I was traveling, I saw an OB in Indiana. And then I ended up at the OB in New Hampshire from weeks 30 to 41. And at 37 weeks, I had someone come in and basically start the GBS swab without really telling me what he was doing. So one interesting note, I think, is that I had gained over 30 pounds by 30 weeks, but I'm still deadlifting, I'm still jogging, I'm still lifting weights, and my blood pressure is excellent. The only ailment I didn't mention yet is that my asthma got a little bit worse during the end of the pregnancy. I had a doctor tell me I had gained too much weight and that I should watch it before asking

**GARRETT KUSMIERZ:** about my nutrition habits or my exercising habits, my steps, any of that. And then I had a doctor notice that I had a doula on my chart, and she came in and lectured me about how I needed to really understand that they were in charge and that they wanted to use interventions that I couldn't say no to. And I then, you know, I let her speak, and then I said, did you wanna know what my birth plan is? You know, I'm open to whatever. And so that was kind of strange. And at 38 weeks, they told me I should do an induction. And I said, I wanna make it to 40 before we have any reason, you know, to induce.

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** What was the rationale behind the 38-week induction?

**GARRETT KUSMIERZ:** Nothing. They just said it was easy for their schedule.

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** Wow. Okay. Backing up a tiny bit, because who cares that you gained 30 pounds at 38 weeks?

**GARRETT KUSMIERZ:** Right. When I was healthy. And it's within normal anyway.

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** Are you asking a diet? Even if it was a lot. So even if you're above normal, but you're doing healthy things, that sometimes happens, it's not normal, it's average, right? Even if you're above average. But you weren't, and I mean, just not adding up for me, like, why would they panic on you? You're clearly super healthy. Separately, I just wondered for you, being someone who, if you're a bodybuilder, you're really inspecting every ounce of you all the time and how you look. How did it feel for you to all of a sudden have a different shape?

**GARRETT KUSMIERZ:** You know, I had a very rough eating disorder, maybe three, four years before I got pregnant. And so I felt like I had completely collapsed that version of myself. So I was just happy. I was excited to be healthy and I was excited to have a bump. I was excited about how I could, you know, I'd been collecting resources and following certain people. I was excited to like recover at a nice slow pace postpartum. I felt so good that the reason that her comment upset me so much is that it didn't seem medically substantiated. And I was like, are you gonna ask me about my eating habits? Are you gonna ask me about my exercise? Are you gonna ask me about how I'm feeling? And by the way, I'm 31 weeks right now. Are you telling me to go on a diet?

**GARRETT KUSMIERZ:** And she said, I'm not telling you to go on a diet. I'm just telling you to watch it. And I said, well, I'm gonna continue to keep doing what I'm doing because I feel really good and I'm eating really well. I ultimately gained about 55 pounds total.

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** Again, it's above average, but if you're doing healthy things, you're eating well and you're exercising, then that's just the way your body handles pregnancy.

**GARRETT KUSMIERZ:** Exactly.

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** Wow. So it's kind of amazing. I don't wanna just let that pass by that you went from having an eating disorder to embracing your bump and also pushing back a bit against bad advice about essentially dieting while you're pregnant. Okay. So you had this idea, you're a healthy person, you wanna have a relatively natural birth, especially in your case. In one try, your body took a sperm and an egg and made a whole human being out of it. Clearly it knows how to deliver the finished product, but you're getting a lot of medical model dialogue is how I would chalk it up. We need to induce a huge distrust in your body's ability to do what was about to happen. And you mentioned getting induced. So I assume that they succeeded in twisting your arm.

**GARRETT KUSMIERZ:** Yeah, unfortunately. Part of those discussions between 38, 39 and 40 weeks were so confusing to me because my body wasn't giving me any signs that it was ready. And at the same time, it was my first. So I was like, maybe I'm missing something. Is this sort of a gaslighty experience of like, am I missing something that my body's telling me? And mind you, I've

been so in tune with my body through exercising, through meditation, through massage, just really trying to stay in my body. And so at 40 weeks, they said, we'd like to induce you. I said, can I have an extra week? And they said, only if you come in for a non-stress test. And then they continued to follow me. Everything looked normal. And then at 41 weeks, we did an ultrasound.

**GARRETT KUSMIERZ:** They're like, he looks great. He looks happy. He looks awesome, like all is well. And we need to induce you. And I said, can I have a couple more days? And they said, if you don't call us by tomorrow, we can't guarantee we'll have a spot for you on our floor. Yeah, and so it was really scary for me because I'm like, well, I can't be a bad mom. You know, I can't like put my son in harm. My intuition was obviously like, you're not ready yet. I personally, as the first child, my mom, my mom didn't give birth to me until 42 and four. She was on a Air Force base. So they didn't induce it because during Desert Storm and different reality. But I went in, I went in on a Monday afternoon and that's when the induction started

**GARRETT KUSMIERZ:** and it was a four day process.

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** Do you remember at the beginning your stats in terms of, did you have a facement dilation?

**GARRETT KUSMIERZ:** Nothing, nothing. Well, I guess I had lost a mucus plug. That was one positive thing. And they said that my cervix was softening but that I was zero dilated. So they started with the, I'm gonna pronounce this wrong but it starts with an M, the mesoprost.

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** Mesoprostol.

**GARRETT KUSMIERZ:** Yes, they started with that as the induction process. And I was really scared because I was just like, I don't know what to expect and my body's kind of being told what to do now.

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** Yeah. And how did you react to it, the medication?

**GARRETT KUSMIERZ:** My body did not react. The first pill, I think they inserted vaginally, I think at seven hours they checked and there was no change. They put in another one. And I think I got to a half centimeter by the morning. They put a third one in. So a lot of cervical checks going on which is important to note because I ended up with an infection. And it was, I wanna say, if I'm timing this right, by Wednesday, they didn't do a folly balloon until Wednesday morning.

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** Well, did you feel anything happening?

**GARRETT KUSMIERZ:** I started getting some pretty painful contractions but they were erratic. They weren't in any sort of pace or I guess rhythmic sense.

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** Okay. And did that change after the second one?

**GARRETT KUSMIERZ:** No. It was, I wanna say, middle of the night, Tuesday, that they started with the folly balloon. And right before they did the folly balloon, they started pitocin. And so it was two ways of attacking it at once. And as soon as the folly balloon went in, which by the way, all of the cervical checks and the inserting of the folly balloon, they really put a lot of fear in me and I was really uncomfortable but I kept telling myself, I'm about to push a baby out. So I have to be brave and I have

to be comfortable with it. But it all felt really kind of abrasive and I felt a lot of fear, which was I think also making my body tense up. But I wanna say 20 minutes into the folly balloon, my son's heart rate began to drop. And that was a little scary

**GARRETT KUSMIERZ:** because they were like, we're gonna watch it. They monitored it. Maybe we had it in for another hour. I'm trying to do some squats with my doula to kind of work the baby down. And then his heart rate got worse. So they took the folly balloon out. And at that point, I think I had made it to four centimeters.

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** Wow. And which is all the folly balloon can get you to anyway. It's about four centimeters. So once you tug on it, it'll come out. So you so far have a sort of a triple induction going ahead of the misoprostol, which is Cytotec is the brand name. And it's supposed to cause your cervix to soften and open and cause contractions, but it really isn't. And then the folly balloon is mechanical pressure. It's inserted like during a pelvic check where they can put the tip of this thin capillary that's like a balloon on the other side of your cervix so that it's in your womb pushing down on your cervix and mechanically trying to dilate it. And also pressure against the cervix is what releases oxytocin. And then once that gets to four centimeters,

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** like I said, it can come out. And at the same time, they're giving you a pitocin to make your uterus contract. It's a lot going on all at the same time. And it sounds like your baby didn't really like it, but on top of everything else, the way you're talking is that you are in fight or flight mode.

**GARRETT KUSMIERZ:** 1000%, yeah.

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** There's a lot of fear. And so, you know what? On one hand, we're giving you synthetic oxytocin, which has the effect on your uterus to make it contract, but not the effect on your brain that calms you and makes you experience the things that are pleasing physically and mentally pleasing doesn't enhance them for you. The adrenaline is making you tighten your whole body. And so, we're trying to force all this pressure mechanically and medically into a body that's very, very tight, into a mind that's very tight and just full of adrenaline, it sounds like to me. And your baby wasn't having it.

**GARRETT KUSMIERZ:** 1000%. I remember I had made a playlist that was supposed to be calming and supportive. And there was the, maybe it was an hour or 45 minutes or so when we were trying to really lean into the volleyball and keep with it despite the questionable heart rate. And I put the playlist in and I just remember being like, this is really not doing much for me. Like, I really can't get there. I really can't get to that place of relaxing and calming down. And it felt really defeating when they told me I was only at four centimeters, cause it's Wednesday now. And I've been in the hospital since Monday. And it just felt like, is my body feeling. And of course at the time, I'm not like having totally conscious thoughts, but the kind of next step,

**GARRETT KUSMIERZ:** they had given me fentanyl during the volleyball and to try to help with the pain, but it didn't feel like it was-

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** So that was my other question, no epidural at this point?

**GARRETT KUSMIERZ:** Not at this point, no. And so after the volleyball came out, they cranked up the pitocin again. And they said, this is the point where you may decide that you're ready for that epidural. And I said, you know, I want to try to move through it cause I want to stay active. I want to be able to move my body. Let's keep with it. And there were a few hours. So it's like midday, I think when the volleyball came out a few hours and I'm getting into a lot of pain. And at some point they broke my water, I think. The little hazy on the Wednesday timeline, but I finally decided, you know, I think I want to do this. And it depends on how far I am. Like maybe I've progressed. I've been experiencing these contractions.

**GARRETT KUSMIERZ:** And they said, you're just under six centimeters. And I looked at my husband and I was like, give me the epidural. I need this. Problem was the hospital had one and they weren't going to be able to get there until pretty late. And so there was also a question of whether, yes, and so they'll come in, but they're with someone else right now. You know, it's going to take a little while. So I'm breathing through it, breathing through it. And I felt so exhausted. And so nervous, like I couldn't eat, but no one told me, hey, this is the time that you should eat because if you get the epidural, you're really not going to be able to eat. And on Wednesday with all that went down, I didn't eat because I just felt so scared and unsure

**GARRETT KUSMIERZ:** and what's a poly balloon and you know, moving through that. So there was also a question of if I was allergic to lidocaine or not. And it was listed as uncertain in my chart after something I had done years ago. We decided to go through with it. I'm going through like the teeth chattering. And as soon as that happened, they said, okay, just so you know, you can't eat now. I was like, oh no, like I'm starving. And they looked at my husband. They said, go to sleep. She's going to wake up tomorrow, Thursday, and she's going to be ready to push. Like this is looked at my dual. It's time to get some rest, time to get some rest. So everyone gets quiet and I feel the worst pain I've ever felt in my life.

**GARRETT KUSMIERZ:** And I just instinctively thought I'm transitioning. Like I'm transitioning. I started calling out for my mom. I felt like I was dying. And a nurse said, hold on, hold on. Like what's wrong? I was like, I feel everything. And she said, no, you don't sweetie. Like it works. Like the epidural works. Like you're going to feel fine. You're just nervous. And I'm screaming out. My doula wakes up, my husband wakes up there next to me. And they're like, something's not right. And I also had spiked 105 fever. So I have a fever going on. I'm feeling all the pain. And they said, you know, what we're going to do next is we're going to give you a catheter because we do have to do that based on the epidural.

**GARRETT KUSMIERZ:** And it'll prove to you that your epidural is working because you're not going to feel anything. And when they put the catheter in, I screamed bloody murder because I felt everything. And then they said, look at the anesthesiologist and redo this. It looks like her epidural is not working. But at this point, I'm, I guess transitioning and I have a fever and the anesthesiologist was like, it's too late for me to redo it. So I had to figure out how to move through that pain. And my doula really stepped in to be like, I mean, essentially like a motherly figure to just stoop me. I remember her kissing me, hugging me being like, it's okay, sweetie. Like we got this. But I was truly calling out. I screamed like, I want my mom in that moment.

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** These are the kind of births that, you know, I was a doula for many years and I still work with the doula community pretty closely. These are the kind of births that sometimes will make a doula no longer support birth in the hospital. Like switch to only out of hospital birth and home birth. And I have to say the overwhelming majority of births that I've attended in the hospital are not like this. But this kind of thing doesn't happen. I've never seen it happen in the midwiffic model. And I'm really sorry that happened to you. You're calling out for your mom, but she's not there.

**GARRETT KUSMIERZ:** No, and I don't know if it felt like I was dying. Like literally, I don't know. But it was really scary, really intense. And this one nurse brought me a Popsicle and she was like, if this can calm you down, you know, Popsicle, I'm not supposed to give it to you, but it's something to feel like you're chewing on something. And you know, between my husband and my doula, because the epidural kind of finished on 10, 30, 11 o'clock, if I remember. So for a few hours I'm progressing and I just remember they came in about 3 a.m. and they're like, you're gonna be ready to push soon. And I just remember thinking like, well, I don't really feel like I'm ready to push. So, okay. And so at 4 a.m. they brought like a bar in that I could hold down.

**GARRETT KUSMIERZ:** And I love chin-ups, it's like my favorite thing. Weighted chin-ups, all the chin-ups. So I was like, born ready for this. This is the best type of birth physician for me. And you know, we're moving through that. And it just felt like hours and hours and like nothing was happening. So 4 a.m. we start. And again, nothing, nothing, nothing, nothing, nothing. I'm pretty exhausted. And at about 9 a.m., so what is that? Five hours later? The one doctor that I really didn't like that did the swab on me comes in and said, if you don't get this baby out in 15 minutes I'm taking you to C-section. Which I kind of in hindsight, I'm like, why didn't they not move me sooner? Like, were they short-staffed? Like that is always a mystery.

**GARRETT KUSMIERZ:** Not that I wanted a C-section, but when he came in I felt so defeated. And this sounds negative and I don't say this to like scare people from birth. I can't wait to give birth again. I've done a lot of work around it. But I felt like a prisoner of war because the pain plus the lack of control of my own body just felt like pure torture. But once he said, you have this time, something kicked in where I was like, I'm gonna do this. I'm gonna get this baby out. And my body started doing the fetal ejection reflex, which was really cool to experience.

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** Wow, okay. We know how to get you motivated. Throw down the gauntlet.

**GARRETT KUSMIERZ:** Yeah, I needed the all in, I guess. I ripped my robe off and I was like, all right, this is it. And they could tell that I was experiencing some level of natural push to there. Like, whatever you're doing, it's working. And I said, I'm doing nothing. I just feel like I'm gonna throw up. But instead of throwing up, my body was bearing down. So we just rode that natural wave. And then the OB ended up getting held up in surgery. So he didn't come back until 950 when my son was born.

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** Congratulations.

**GARRETT KUSMIERZ:** Thank you.

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** I mean, was there a moment of joy when the baby came out that you could feel either physically, mentally, spiritually, or was it just pure exhaustion?

**GARRETT KUSMIERZ:** It was really complex because the first thing I noticed when I looked up, because I'm kind of looking at him was, okay, he made a noise. I was like, okay, so there's initial relief. But then I kind of peered to my right and there were like six or seven people in the room that I hadn't even noticed with an extra monitoring system for him. So then they took him from me and I was like, I want my baby, why are you taking him? And the doctor said, you have an infection. Oh, then he started tugging on the placenta. And I was like, I want to take my time with this. Please don't pull. I can't take any more pain right now. Like if you're gonna do anything, like stop, stop. And he said, you have an infection,

**GARRETT KUSMIERZ:** which was the first time anyone had pulled me to my face that I had an infection. He goes, I need to get this out immediately. Placenta comes out and then he goes to stitch. And I'm like, if you're gonna like, give me lidocaine, give me numbing, give me something. I can't take any more pain. And he did it anyway. And then he stood up and said like, thank you and have a nice day and walked out. And I looked at my husband and I said, I am so sad. And my husband was like, why? And I said, because I wanted more kids. I can't.

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** My heart is melting for you so badly. I'm really sorry. It was a terrible experience. It sounds also like it kicked off what happened next in postpartum didn't get much better. So let's take a little break and find out about your postpartum experience. And again, I think anybody listening to you can hear this incredible strength that you have inside and this almost nuclear energy that makes you one of those people that stands up, recovers and helps other people. And we're gonna find out how when we come back. Welcome back. We're talking to Garrett Kozmeyers. And if you are listening, you can hear how strong Garrett is in many different ways and how she got crushed by the system. And I was just thinking in my head,

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** this whole time we're ramming pitocin, synthetic oxytocin, just forcing your uterus to go, go, go like the gas pedal. And at the same time, your body is releasing adrenaline, which is the brake pedal. And it's just fighting. We're making your body fight your body and not giving your mind a chance to catch up. And I'm sort of grateful that at the end you were able to bring your baby out vaginally and not have to have surgery on top of that, but still very traumatic. How was postpartum? We know it wasn't great.

**GARRETT KUSMIERZ:** Yeah, you know, obviously after that, I mean, it was the hardest thing I'd experienced at that point in my life. And you always think about in hard times, what do you need, what do you want? You wanna be gentle with yourself. You wanna go to the people you love. But at the same time, now I have to care for this little newborn who's been through this crazy experience and we haven't slept for four days. So we were zombies and we slept for about two hours while they took him for monitoring. And I felt like the worst mom. I'm like, I can't fall asleep, I can't sleep. My body just really passed out. And then when we got home, my mom was there to meet us. I was so grateful. And she said, you're the kid I never worry about.

**GARRETT KUSMIERZ:** She goes, but when I saw the look on your face, when you pulled up and you fell into my arms, my mom was just like, I knew, it was rough. So we were really lucky to have my mom. We basically gave her the baby and we said, wake us up in 90 minutes when he needs to eat because we are exhausted. We slept again. And then is when things kind of got rough, which was I

experienced this severe, severe, severe engorgement and severe breast milk leakage that luckily I didn't have any extra complications from the infection, but I had cracked raw bleeding nipples from differing opinions of how to breastfeed that I got in the hospital. And I continued to breastfeed through that pain and soreness. But on top of that, this engorgement

**GARRETT KUSMIERZ:** and people just kept saying, put pads in your bra. And I'm like, well, my bras don't fit. Even the ones I was wearing at the end of my pregnancy, I'm so engorged. And I couldn't even put the gel pads or silverettes or any of those nice cooling things for your nipples because I didn't have a bra to hold them. And so I tried a cami, but even that got too tight and I had red marks on my skin from the cami. And so I had Googled what to do. And it was like, if you don't want to catch it, it literally said sleep on a towel. And I was just dumbfounded. So I was literally sleeping on a towel to avoid having to change my sheets every single day from leaking breast milk. But that amount of personal hygiene attention that I needed to put on myself

**GARRETT KUSMIERZ:** made it harder to obviously focus on my son. I did my best, but I really needed the extra hands of my husband and my mom due to those challenges.

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** Is that something anybody prepared you for? And did you have a lactation helper to try to work through it together?

**GARRETT KUSMIERZ:** You know, I was so lucky from my podcast. Before I even went into the hospital, I had interviewed doulas. I had interviewed midwives. I knew so many things about what to do to be prepared. I had scheduled a lactation consultant to come to my house the day I got home from the hospital. She came and helped. And you know, I had a lot of resources available and I knew that my mom had a lot of leaking, but I didn't really know how hard it would be to like live through it.

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** And was there professional support while you were going through it? I mean, just sleeping on a towel, it's helpful advice, but was there nothing else?

**GARRETT KUSMIERZ:** You know, there are amazing devices out there to be, you know, there's hands-free pumps. There's the HACA, which is like sort of a suction cup, but it helps you collect milk while you're nursing. So I had these sorts of tools for when I was nursing and when I wanted to collect that milk. But when I wanted to just try to sleep in those precious 90-minute windows, two-hour windows I was getting, or when I was walking around the house, I couldn't find anything that was comfortable enough. And by the way, it's not to say that there aren't real bras out there that I could have gone to purchase, but I joke that bra shopping is like jean shopping. Like who has the bandwidth after a traumatic birth to go out and bra shop with a newborn baby?

**GARRETT KUSMIERZ:** You know, you're likely not even leaving the house.

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** That's a good point because I was wondering that and I bet a bunch of people were wondering that, but it's a really good point. Even if the birth goes great and they're just like, Garrett, you just had a baby after a great nine-hour labor. You're like, I wanna go to Disneyland. No, you can't, that's just the beginning. That's not the end of the story. You're just like thrown into a world of essentially self-sacrifice for this little being. That's if everything goes just fine, which it didn't for you. Okay, so when you didn't have a solution for your problem, you created one at some point.

**GARRETT KUSMIERZ:** Yeah, I was changing a lot of diapers. Actually, initially my husband was changing all the diapers, but then eventually I'm home and I would basically walk around in a fitted rib-knit tank top, no bra and a sweatshirt over it because I kind of hoped that the sweatshirt would absorb some of the milk. And I also, I was changing these diapers and I'm like, why is there not a diaper for my boobs? I'm wearing an adult diaper because of my vaginal birth. Why can't I have something to keep me cozy and dry up here? So I had the idea of inventing this absorbent disposable bra, but I also had zero bandwidth to even think about where to start. And so I sat on it until, it kind of hit me like lightning again when my son was about 16, 17 months old.

**GARRETT KUSMIERZ:** And I was like, okay, I'm gonna go explore this.

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** And had you ever created a product before?

**GARRETT KUSMIERZ:** Just my book, which, you know, the book is more about the writing, you know, finding a cover artist and having Amazon print books is not as complicated as I guess I would think. Creating, developing, bringing to market a product,

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** what was that like for you?

**GARRETT KUSMIERZ:** Well, what I didn't know is that it was going to directly parallel my experience with trying to get pregnant a second time. We started basically right before my son turned one. And so for the first four months, we weren't getting pregnant. I was like, well, we had our wedding. You know, we had two other weddings. We had a bachelorette party. Like I was busy, it's okay. And then I was like, okay, and I wanna get pregnant and I wanna start this company. And we had no idea it would take us two and a half years to create this bra. I thought it'd be done in six months. And so ignorance is bliss. We started doing it, but as soon as we kind of figured out that it might take a little while, we started inventing other products

**GARRETT KUSMIERZ:** and creating other products as well.

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** What were some of the bigger roadblocks?

**GARRETT KUSMIERZ:** I think having other people help you design something that don't have the inspiration and the pain point. First and foremost, it's about like enrolling and engaging them in the idea and the pain point, but then having it meet our specific conditions, like biodegradable materials, having it come in at a certain unit economic price so that it's viable in the market. And we were working with a company that is sort of a liaison to other countries, which is amazing and so helpful. But we were in the beginning a little bit misguided, not by any ill will, but people who didn't fully understand what we were doing. And then it took many iterations of design and trying those designs. So I guess there's no one major roadblock I can point to,

**GARRETT KUSMIERZ:** but really just building the relationship with the factory and helping them understand what we were doing, building the team internally to make it all happen. It just took way longer than I ever anticipated.

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** Flash forward, you did it.

**GARRETT KUSMIERZ:** Yeah.

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** So tell me about that product and the other products that you've developed.

**GARRETT KUSMIERZ:** Yeah, so we actually just launched not too long ago, which is crazy because again, I have other news that I'll share with you soon, but I have other things going on that it's been a very surreal few weeks recently. And so the product, it comes in a set of seven, just like when you buy pads or tampons or diapers, you're not just buying one because it is single use, but it's made of biodegradable materials so that anyone that would feel guilty doesn't need to feel guilty because it's good on the environment. And what was really important to me is that it had a soft interior for the raw, cracked, sore, bleeding nipples that women experience, but also the ability to nurse while wearing it. So it has five snaps on the front

**GARRETT KUSMIERZ:** so that you can undo the first two to three and keep it connected at the bottom so that if you don't have your milk collector device handy and it's in the middle of the night and you are super leaker, you can just leak into the other side while you're nursing on one side.

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** Oh, nice. And what do you call it?

**GARRETT KUSMIERZ:** The nipple diaper.

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** Oh, perfect. Very descriptive. And then you have other products as well?

**GARRETT KUSMIERZ:** Yes. So we were thinking about, what are the main pain points you're going through if you are a leaker, which would be raw, cracked, bleeding nipples. And so we wanted to put an innovative spin on a nipple balm. And that was the first product that we actually were able to come out with. It got done the quickest. But my pain point with nipple balm was that I had to dunk my finger in a jar and I had accidentally got these, there's a misunderstanding at the nail place, these long nails. So I'm dunking my finger in a jar sitting with a newborn in bed and I'm wiping the gunk off on my burp cloth or whatever I have handy. So we have a nipple balm, we call it nip gloss, that opens with one hand because moms do everything with one hand

**GARRETT KUSMIERZ:** and a ceramic applicator, which just makes it easier to use. It also feels quite cooling when you use it and it's also made of sustainable material.

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** Oh my gosh. Nip gloss is amazing. I'm all about the puns. And that looks like an incredible product and also just like a great innovation, like a product that-

**GARRETT KUSMIERZ:** Yeah, I just thought, why not? Why not make it better? Yeah, why not make it better? And we also have fertility products because of my fertility journey that I didn't expect to be on.

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** What kind of products for fertility?

**GARRETT KUSMIERZ:** We have an easy to use ergonomic pea collector and we call it the Cozy Pea and it's for collecting your urine, whether you're testing for LH or you're testing for pregnancy early. I would basically test for my LH strip about five days out of the month and then I would also start testing for pregnancy as early as eight or nine days post-obulation, which would then create about seven to nine days of testing for pregnancy because after such a long journey, sounds kind of

grim to say, but I was like, what if I catch at least a chemical pregnancy? At least I'll know that something's starting, but maybe it's not working so I'd always test as early as I could, which created about 10 to 15, sometimes 20 days a month of peeing on my hand,

**GARRETT KUSMIERZ:** trying to put my pee in something to test it.

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** Oh, you're an innovator, a thinker and someone who recognizes a need and comes with a solution. What's the company called?

**GARRETT KUSMIERZ:** Company is called Cozy Cozy and our mission is to bring comfort to moms so that they can better bond with their baby.

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** I love what you're doing. Okay, we've alluded to the fact that although your first pregnancy was a one-shot deal, trying for a second pregnancy has not come easy to you. I feel like we can do at least a whole podcast on your fertility journey, because I'm so curious actually how you with your dynamic and personality have handled it and how the experience has been. But we're at the end of this episode, so where are you in the journey?

**GARRETT KUSMIERZ:** The exciting news is that I'm pregnant. I am seven and a half weeks pregnant and do not take any of the nausea for granted and we ended up conceiving through IVF. It took us two and a half years to agree to do IVF, a few attempts, and we're so grateful to now be pregnant.

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** I am a better person for having spent this hour with you. I've learned a lot from you. I'm inspired by you in many different ways and I'm excited for you. Congratulations on this next step.

**GARRETT KUSMIERZ:** Thank you.

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** I'm again super curious about how the fertility unfolded for you and what that journey was like. I have no doubt that you're gonna come up with a bunch of new products and remedies for people who struggle with what you've been struggling with. And I'm super curious about what your plans are gonna be for this next birth with everything that you have behind you that you've learned from. So I hope you'll come back and do another episode with us.

**GARRETT KUSMIERZ:** Thank you. I'd love to. Thank you so much for having me.

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** My pleasure. Garrett, tell us where we can find you online.

**GARRETT KUSMIERZ:** You can find us at CozyCozy.com, which is spelled K-O-Z-E, K-O-Z-E, and on Instagram and TikTok, CozyCozyMama, and I'm at Garrett N. Wood on Instagram.

**DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC:** Amazing. Garrett, Kaz Myers, thank you for joining us and 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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