The Journey to Pregnancy with Carli Roth and Joshua Katz

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IN THIS EPISODE

Carli Roth and Joshua Katz are expecting their first baby — thanks to eggs retrieved before they even met. After nearly two years of fertility hurdles, miscarriages, and multiple IUIs on the road to a successful IVF transfer, they join Dr. Elliot Berlin, DC to share their journey to pregnancy — and what inspired them to build a company around an often uncomfortable topic: hemorrhoids.

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DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: My guests today are a couple who took one of the most cringe-inducing, universally avoided health topics and turned it into a mission-driven movement. After nearly two years of fertility hurdles, miscarriages, multiple IUIs, and ultimately a successful IVF transfer using eggs frozen long before they ever met, they're now joyfully expecting their first baby any second, and planning a natural hospital birth with a doula by their side. What makes them remarkable isn't just their journey to pregnancy, but the humor, vulnerability, and total honesty they bring to conversations most people run from.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: In the process, they've built a company that's changing how millions approach hemorrhoids and other wants taboo health issues, and they've strengthened their relationship along the way. I'm Pregnancy Focused Chiropractor, Dr. Elliot Berlin, and you're listening to the Informed Pregnancy Podcast. Carly Roth and Joshua Katz, welcome to the podcast.

CARLI ROTH: Thank you for having us.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I would not be happier to have anybody talk about any topic other than hemorrhoids.

CARLI ROTH: It's what we do, it's what we know, and a big part of our conversations on a daily basis now.

JOSHUA KATZ: That and pregnancy.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: That and pregnancy now. Hemorrhoids and pregnancy, which oftentimes go together like a horse and carriage. So why don't we start at the beginning, Carly, before pregnancy and before get norms, what were you doing professionally and how did you get into this realm of things?

CARLI ROTH: Yeah, so for the past four and a half years, I've been running community for Female Founder Collective and working side by side with an incredible team of women who are supporting the entrepreneurial journey for females from startup mode, inception, pre-launch into women who are building businesses doing well over 400 million in revenue a year. And as a previous founder myself, I swear I would never do it again, but here we are. Being part of FFC has been a beautiful experience in a reminder and just the challenges that come with a female founder and raising money, sourcing operations, building a team, and it has led to incredible opportunities for me to also become an angel investor myself.

CARLI ROTH: So I see a lot of businesses, I hear a lot of stories. My role tends to be a little mix of therapists, customer service, hospitality, support for a lot of our members and our growing community. And when I met Josh very early on, he can talk more to this, but he brought up the idea and I think of starting a hemorrhoids company and there's so much more to norms than just hemorrhoids, but in the beginning it was that and he mentioned it. And so it's always been something that's kind of been sitting in the corner to get started. So it's kind of amazing that you fast-forward three and a half years, four years into where we are now and now it's an actual full thriving business.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Well, congratulations on that. Josh, for you, hemorrhoids are a little more personal.

JOSHUA KATZ: Yeah, but apparently I brought them up on our second date according to Carly. So I guess I might've already started to have grown out of this shame and embarrassment that I had carried with me along with my hemorrhoids for 20 something years. So yeah, hemorrhoids don't define me, but they've definitely been there with me through much of my career and adult life. Although Carly and I only finally crossed paths about four years ago, we definitely lived in similar worlds doing different things. And so it's really fun to be able to do this business and do this life with her because she knows what it means to be an entrepreneur and she also knows what it means and what's required of supporting them. And she does both of those really well.

JOSHUA KATZ: And yeah, I can only -

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I feel like there's going to be a lot of analogies between entrepreneurship and hemorrhoids.

CARLI ROTH: They're both the same.

JOSHUA KATZ: You said

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Starting with that.

JOSHUA KATZ: They do have cycles to them. A typical hemorrhoid flare-up might start with only a little bit of discomfort and then towards days five or six you might be reaching peak pain and discomfort. And then like everything else, it wanes and diminishes. And then like starting multiple businesses, as soon as you're done with one hemorrhoid, you've forgotten all about the pain and suffering that you went through and you act like you're never going to do it again or have it again. And then sure enough, you do it again.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Whole cycle.

JOSHUA KATZ: So I'd say that there are, at least in my experience, quite a few parallels. But what's, I think, dissimilar is that -

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: There's no ointment for entrepreneurship?

CARLI ROTH: Not yet.

JOSHUA KATZ: If there is, I haven't found it. Yeah. But one of the big differences is that people seem to like to talk about their startups and the journeys that they go through. And I think that particularly on podcasts and other forums that have developed over the last decade, there's become a culture of conversation around not just the wins that happen and starting and operating businesses, but the challenges and losses. And for embarrassing self-care issues such as hemorrhoids or diarrhea, gas, bloating, constipation, funky foot fungi, all the things that we're working on in terms of products and other solutions, there isn't really a forum for conversation around these things.

JOSHUA KATZ: And so there isn't really a normalization kind of movement in those categories, certainly not in the way that the solo entrepreneur has become part of a community by virtue of there being these types of forums for it, but also for pregnancy. And I think for women's health, there's been amazing progress in digitizing and connecting the conversations that women are having, whether it's around pregnancy and postpartum or menopause or other things. And so it's interesting because there are these inspirational kind of analogs that we can look to with something like norms and hemorrhoid care, and two of them are right here today.

JOSHUA KATZ: One is conversation around pregnancy and being a mom, becoming a mom, and also even just talking to people about the stuff that, whether it's on business or otherwise, that they maybe otherwise wouldn't celebrate or talk about.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I've been doing what I've been doing for about 25 years and a lot of pregnancy care and our clients opened up to me about what I thought was about everything. And we have this show on our streaming platform in Form Pregnancy Plus, and it's called Growing with Heehe. And I follow a woman, her name is Heehi Stewart through her pregnancy. She had years of being a childbirth professional before she had her own baby. And so it's kind of neat to follow her through and watch her go through all the stages that she's supported so many other people through from both the doula lens and the person going through it lens, the pregnant mama lens. And she kind of talks about everything very openly.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And at one point she's like, "Can we just talk for one minute about the discharge?" I think she was in her third trimester and she's like, "It is like the Cheesecake Factory

down there." Now, first of all, I think I immediately lost any opportunity of getting the Cheesecake Factory as a sponsor of our podcast, but also nobody had ever said that to me before. And again, people open up about everything. And after that episode came out, I'm like, "What do you think about that Cheesecake Factory? Yeah, yeah, I have it, but nobody really talks about it." So I assume that you suffered with hemorrhoids for a long time before you felt comfortable talking about it.

JOSHUA KATZ: Yeah, absolutely. I made a joke earlier about talking to Carly early on about hemorrhoids, and perhaps I delivered it through a vehicle of a new business idea as an indirect way of telling her about something that I hadn't told virtually anybody. But yeah, I mean, for 20 years and through multiple relationships, live-in girlfriends, an ex-wife and so on, it was never something that I talked about. It was something that I hid both me suffering from it and the tubes of yellow butt cream that I stash around the bathroom and in my travel toiletries kit, and certainly wasn't something that I spoke to a doctor or spoke to friends or informed individuals about.

JOSHUA KATZ: And I think as I got older, the silliness of that became more apparent, but also the gap in products, brands, and spaces to ask the questions and have the conversations. It was quite surprising to see that, although I'd been talking about doing this for maybe five or six years, during that time where I was just talking about it, still nobody had done anything about it. And that was a real good signal to me that if somebody else wasn't going to do it, I had to do it. And thankfully, although Carly fortunately hadn't suffered in the same way, she'd been around me enough to understand the urgency of it and what it means to us beyond just being another brand that we launch or product that we sell.

CARLI ROTH: A big piece of that too is just those conversations, right? No one's having them. And when you were talking about comparing them to the business conversations that are happening on podcasts and the entrepreneurial insights that people get, when we talk to people about what we're building and what we're doing, and we're standing at a party and we'll be standing with six people and it's kind of like, has anyone had a hemorrhoid before? There's always one person, they put their hand up, they're a little shy, or Josh notices them and he asks the right next question and they engage in the conversation, they share their story.

CARLI ROTH: And I think having an underlying mission of normalizing embarrassing self-care, because we're all doing it behind the bathroom door anyway. I mean, the times Josh has walked out of the bathroom with an itchy foot, an itchy bum, and then a sty on his eye, he's like, "This is why we're building what we are." And being able to have those conversations, whether they're on a platform like this or one by one in our New York City clubhouse where we've created a space for people to come in and have these conversations and safety and comfort, it just makes everyone feel like they're not alone and they don't have to be navigating this by themselves.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Right. As you said, Josh, even hiding it from the people that you're closest to because it's just embarrassing. All right, let's take a little break. When we come back, hopefully you'll still be pregnant because I mean, what are you, 39 weeks?

CARLI ROTH: 40 weeks tomorrow.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: 40 weeks tomorrow, 396. So I'll make the commercial break real quick. When we come back, I want to find out more about how you guys met and got to this stage. Don't go anywhere. We'll be right back. Welcome back to Carly and Josh. I want to talk to you about how you first met.

CARLI ROTH: Do you want to share, Josh, or do you want me to take it?

JOSHUA KATZ: I would love you to share.

CARLI ROTH: Okay. So I had just moved here from New York.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I was - Here is Los Angeles.

CARLI ROTH: Here is Los Angeles, and I was about five months in on living by myself after living with a couple friends who came to do a two-month stint. And I was at a concert with friends, met a lovely human named Jesse who was doing a movie screening for his documentary the next night. And I was in a place of yes, and I just wanted to say yes to everything that I could to meet people and specifically meet Jewish men. And anyway, Jesse invited me to his screening and I went, and I remember it was a rainy Monday night in October, and I went by myself. It was great. Hung around for some drinks afterwards, and Josh was there with another friend, and he was recently out of a very long-term relationship.

CARLI ROTH: I was very much not recently out of any long-term relationship. And we met, it was very brief. We connected. He found me on Instagram later that evening and slid into my DMs, which I now know is not something he does or even knew how to do. And that was Monday, and we went for a hike early morning on the Friday, which is not something I usually do that early. And while we were hiking, I think it must have been a two and a half hour time spent together and learned a lot. And my ears really perked up when I heard that his dad was South African and me being a South African Jew, I was like, "Oh, you don't say." And the rest is history. I pulled into his driveway that Friday morning and he's like, "I've kidnapped you," or, "What did you say?

CARLI ROTH: You can't leave." And there's some truth to that. I arrived and our relationship was just going and it went and we're here.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: 39 weeks and six days.

JOSHUA KATZ: Yeah,

CARLI ROTH: Most natural meetings.

JOSHUA KATZ: I prefer you leave out the kidnapped you part of it. It's out of context. So Carly, thank you for your version of the story, which is pretty consistent with mine. And normally I would be standing next to you inserting myself with slight edits, but I've got no edits to your version of the story. And I think just the follow-up to that is how both of us were at a time in our lives where we actually knew what we wanted. And so in addition to me being comfortable talking about my hemorrhoids maybe on a second date, we also talked about family and kids and our homes and our timelines, and it was romantically matter

CARLI ROTH: Of fact.

JOSHUA KATZ: We were next to a

CARLI ROTH: Fire. I remember. We had conversation cards that I think our friend Liz gave us for Hanukkah, and we sat by the fire and played them really early on. And I remember just being like, "We are totally aligned."

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: That's a chiropractic dream. Yeah.

JOSHUA KATZ: Oh, that's good. So I think from that time, it was easy for us to actually think about the future while not just only living for the future. And so it seems like both forever and a small amount of time all at once, and certainly the time since we got married and started to try to make a family to now has been similarly, it feels like a long time, but no time at all.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh yeah. Well, I mentioned in the introduction that it didn't come super fast or easy for you.

CARLI ROTH: No, and I remember women saying this to me, but -

JOSHUA KATZ: Clarification, it always comes fast and easy for me, but that's not the issue here.

CARLI ROTH: Super sperm. Yeah, and I remember women saying it all comes in due time, and it's so quickly how you forget when you get pregnant, what the journey was. But I say this and I swear by it, but I got pregnant September. We got married that June, so a couple months later. And if we would've had that baby the following June, our lives would be very different. There would be no norms. And I think the timing of this baby is just so wonderful and aligned and perfect. So I wouldn't change the process for a thing because it just feels right.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I mean, but in the moment it can't feel very good.

CARLI ROTH: No, it didn't. But I think -

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: But you froze eggs earlier.

CARLI ROTH: Yeah. The perk of having a Jewish mother on your shoulder reminding you that you should always freeze your eggs and have your eggs available. She wanted me to do them when I was 28. I was living in New York at the time, and they're like, "You're fine." And then I ended up finally agreeing to do them, and I ended up flying back home to San Diego to freeze them in February of 2020, because my mom wanted to keep them close. She always kind of knew I was going to come back to California, I guess.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: She watched over them.

CARLI ROTH: Yeah, she kept a very close eye on them, and it worked out great. And it's really a fascinating thing because most of my friends have frozen their eggs and none have really been able to use them. They either got pregnant naturally or when they defrosted them or they thawed them, de-thawed them, sorry, they didn't work. And so I recognize how lucky we are that we were able to have used them, gotten three healthy embryos, and now have two more on ice. But that was -

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Instant family.

CARLI ROTH: Yeah. And it's nice to know that if we go through it again or even going through it the first time, we didn't have to do that first half. So the transfer felt pretty simple because it was only the second half of the process.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: You did the first half earlier. How's the pregnancy been?

CARLI ROTH: Pregnancy has been great. I love it. It's been very enjoyable, easy. No nausea, no morning sickness. My body's taken it like a champ. I feel strong. I've been sleeping well. I feel like this is my gift of having a two-year fertility journey.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: It does make you appreciate things in a different way, but it's really interesting for you to say that literally at 40 weeks, because a lot of people say that at 24 weeks, 26 weeks.

CARLI ROTH: I mean, minus my huffing and puffing into the microphone.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, there's no more lung capacity.

CARLI ROTH: No, it feels good. I'm still sleeping. I mean, I think Josh is the one getting less sleep with me grunting every time I'm turning over.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Well, I blame the chiropractic care. Okay, so you have a plan for your birth. What's the vision?

CARLI ROTH: The vision is a unmedicated vaginal birth at Cedars with my loving husband and incredible doula, Stacey Blackwell by my side.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And what went into that thinking? I mean, there's a lot there. There's vaginal versus cesarean. There's hospital versus out of hospital, unmedicated versus medicated.

CARLI ROTH: I'm a naturally curious person, and I think when it comes down to it, I really want to understand what the body is actually capable of doing. I know it intuitively and I know it in theory from stories from other women and just knowing that women have been doing this since the beginning of time. Every single human since the beginning of time has come to this planet in the same way and has started their life in the same way. And the curiosity of if I can do it and kind of testing myself with it, which I feel very confident that I can, but I also understand that these are birth preferences.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I feel your entrepreneurial spirit coming out again.

CARLI ROTH: I think we live a little too far from a hospital to feel safe doing this at home. And I think for me, knowing that medical interventions are available at the door if needed makes me actually calmer than attempting a home birth. But Stacey's absolutely incredible and she's really prepared us, and I feel more so excited more than anything. And just understanding the physiological components that go into birth and understanding what the body's doing and how it works and the mechanisms and the hormones and everything that comes into play to actually make it possible is really just spectacular information.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: How do you see the role of Stacy versus the role of Josh?

CARLI ROTH: Josh is there for me and Stacy's sort of there for the two of us. So she's really the vocal one who's kind of the intermediary between the nurses and the doctor, and she knows what we want, but this way Josh gets to be a hundred percent next to me and my support, and he doesn't have to try to be in three different places at once and thinking through any of the things that we went over and he can just be there.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Actually, my wife and I were both doulas and we hired a doula for the birth because I wanted to be the partner. I wanted to be the husband. Anybody can be the doula.

CARLI ROTH: Was that hard for you? Did you catch yourself sort of leaning into your doula instincts?

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: A little bit. I think there's overlap between if you have experience with birth and you have some training, I think there's some overlap, but only one person can be the partner. Josh knows you a lot better than Stacey knows you. He knows what makes you tick. He knows what makes you smile. He knows what your expressions mean even when you're not talking. Doulas can kind of tap into that somewhat, but your partner's the only one who really can sometimes just hold you in a little embrace or whisper just the right thing or just a little kiss at the right time and just make you feel safe that way. But also generally, especially on a first birth, doesn't really have experience with what's going on and what's normal and what's atypical.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: So where a doula can kind of come in and make you feel safe that way. Oh, that thing that you're feeling that you've never felt before, it's intense, but it's totally normal and if you surrender to it, it'll feel a lot better. So I think the two have different roles with a little bit of overlap, and I wanted to be the partner without having the kind of pressure, like you said, to also be the doula. Carla, you didn't get hemorrhoids during your pregnancy. Is that, no pun intended, but does that bum you out? It's your whole thing and you have nothing to talk about.

CARLI ROTH: We have been, fingers crossed, but it's not over. I haven't pushed yet, so there's still a possibility. I did have, for the past two weeks or so, I have had an itchy inflammation situation happening between my nipples, my butt, my vagina, my belly is just crazy itching. And I though when that was starting on my butt, I was like, "We're doing it. We got our hemorrhoid." But it turns out it's just dry discomfort.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: At least you have dry itchy nipples and stuff to talk about.

CARLI ROTH: Yeah. I mean, I went through all the products when I had that moment of thinking it was hemorrhoids and everything was incredible and I'm still using our witch hazel wipes. Sometimes I'm using the cream, but it's not there yet. There's still a chance. We're still hoping.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: How has pregnancy affected the relationship for you, Josh?

JOSHUA KATZ: I think it's been fantastic on a lot of levels. I think while we were trying to get pregnant, it was a very, although certain aspects that were traumatic, it was also very comforting to see how the two of us could navigate something like that because you see how each of you endure

and support each other, and in some ways it seems like a good test for all the other tests that are ahead. And maybe that's the silver lining on something that we have now seems so far behind us. But I think since she's been pregnant, it's been similarly really amazing to see Carly preparing to and becoming a mom.

JOSHUA KATZ: And it's been good for me to see whether or not I really have it in me to step up and evolve and do the types of things that maybe a younger self of me doubted I could do or would do with grace and seeing that for the most part I am. And I almost cringe when Carly talks about how easy her pregnancy has been because I know how difficult it can be for a lot of other moms. And so similarly, I say this next thing with all due respect is that Carly's just a damn joy to be around in general. And as she's been pregnant, it's been just more of the good stuff. And so she said she's been very fortunate not to be sick, not to have any physical complications.

JOSHUA KATZ: So aside from, as she says, her heavier breathing at night and convenient inability to do certain things that she probably could do, but now has an excuse not to, it's been really good. And it's also really fun to have a project together, a project that's not work, a project that's not about something ephemeral, but also that has gravity to it. And I know that it's just the beginning of a project, but even the project of becoming pregnant and then the project of getting ready to have a baby, those are fun things to do with people that you'd like to be a partner with. Yeah, it's been fun.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Sounds like it's been really bonding for you.

JOSHUA KATZ: Yeah. I mean, we work and live in the same space. The only times I'm not around Carly is when she's at one of her many, many appointments, whether she's going to see a chiropractor on the west side of Los Angeles or she's doing any number of things with her many amazing healers and support system. But other than that, we're together all the time and it couldn't be more joyous.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I think pregnancy is all about the pillows and all about the appointments.

JOSHUA KATZ: The pillows?

CARLI ROTH: You heard it from a doctor, Josh. That wasn't me.

JOSHUA KATZ: Yeah. I mean, okay, so I'm going to assume that Dr. Berlin is a bit biased in this, but the amount of pillows, specialty pillows, of pillows of all shapes, sizes, densities.

CARLI ROTH: And I still don't even have one of those big pregnancy pillows.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, the giant U-shape. We had that one and many others, as Josh was talking about. In our house, I called it the Berlin Wall because I need an intercom to talk to my wife over the pillows to see how the weather was on her side of the wall.

CARLI ROTH: Yeah. Shame. Even snuggling is so hard sometimes because it's just like either way you turn, there's either a pillow or a belly and you can't get too much closer.

JOSHUA KATZ: Yeah. These are the good things and - Beautiful problems. The good problems to have. So yes, I will be curious to see what we do with all these highly specialized pillows, because

even if one of those huge body pillows, that's something that we could have converted or otherwise utilized postpartum. But there's some very unique ones that I'd be interested to see how Carly chooses to creatively utilize those in the future.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: A dog bed. What I like actually, what you can't see at home is Carly is squirming around quite a bit, and I'm just hoping that her water breaks on the podcast. That has never happened yet before.

CARLI ROTH: I was actually just thinking that I'm getting so flooded with love and appreciation from even just hearing Josh speak and just kind of going through all of this. I'm like, there's so much oxytocin probably running through my body right now that would be an interesting thing to trigger some curtain actions later.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I could do better. I don't know. I'm out of practice.

JOSHUA KATZ: Insert cheek popping noise.

CARLI ROTH: Replicating water break.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Actually, that is our sound that goes into commercial breaks. So why don't we do that right now when we come back? We've teased all this information about get norms. I want to get serious about it, learn more about what it is and how people can access it. Don't go anywhere. We'll be right back. In case you're wondering, Carly is still pregnant and let's talk about get norms. Okay, so this is the other baby, get

JOSHUA KATZ: Norms.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Norms. And it started with hemorrhoids, which plague a lot of people. Let's start there. What are the stats? How many people actually struggle with hemorrhoids?

JOSHUA KATZ: Statistically speaking, 15 million plus Americans self-report having hemorrhoids each year, and 50% of us will get them before we're 50. As you probably know, 40% of women experience hemorrhoids during or after pregnancy, and oftentimes it It's a recurring condition after a new mom has them that might either be caused by them being pregnant or the act of childbirth. So it's incredibly common. It's statistically more common than a lot of other less taboo personal health conditions that we talk about and most of us have products for year round in our medicine cabinets, and yet it's underrepresented in popular conversation and misrepresented in popular culture. And so it's not just me out there.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I'm going to go back about 15 years, maybe even more, probably somewhere between 15 and 20 years ago. I was really differentiating myself in the world of prenatal care, which at the time certainly wasn't a chiropractic specialty for various reasons. All the arrows pointed in that direction, that's where our practice was moving. And I had my first lunch with an OBGYN. Actually, it was my second lunch. I came the first time and I came because we had several clients in common and I was doing all these things to help them sometimes with back pain and other types of discomfort and sometimes just to improve function of the low back, hips and pelvis for the pregnancy and for the birth, better function for birth.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And based on what his clients were saying, he didn't really understand what I was doing, so I wanted to go in there and show him. And it's also unique that I went to massage school and chiropractic school and smushed them together so it's not exactly what a typical chiropractor does. And I said it's my second lunch because I went the first time on lunch time with my spine. I walked in with my big spine to hold it and show him what I was doing and I waited for a little bit. Then I went into his office and he goes, "Where's lunch?" I'm like, "Oh, was I supposed to bring lunch?" He goes, "You don't come to a doctor's office for a lunch without lunch." And he nicely kicked me out. He's like, "I got to go get lunch."

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: So we never had a chance to talk about it. He goes, "Look, I'm going to give you a second chance. Come back next week with lunch." And I came and there were a couple of other doctors and I read a whole deli platter from Pico Kosher Deli of Blessed Memory. And at first they kind of showed me into his office and he was on the phone. This story has a point. And he's on the phone and he seems to be talking to a woman and I could even hear her through the phone. It was kind of loud and she's really worked up and I'm motioning to him, should I leave while you're talking to one of your patients? No, no. He motions to me, sit down.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And she is just really worked up talking about something that very uncomfortable and I don't know and how am I supposed to deal with this and blah, blah, blah. And I don't even know what she's talking about until he says to her, he says, Judy, you know the great thing about having hemorrhoids? And then there was a pause and he goes, at least you're not a perfect asshole. And she laughed also. I could hear her laughing. And it just made her feel so better with a tiny bit of humor. And that was probably one of the earliest, biggest lessons for me too, that at the right time, sometimes it's just psychological first aid. You can make somebody feel better in their mind than you can make somebody feel better in their body.

CARLI ROTH: Yeah, 100%. More

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Comfortable.

CARLI ROTH: I mean, that's a big underlying mission of ours is we always try to say, it's hemorrhoids with a smile and our creams come with these multicolored finger cots so that you have something joyful to put on your finger and apply the cream if touching your ankle is uncomfortable, which is for many people. And there's a fine line that we ride in terms of not making fun and not making it full of puns and creating shame, but creating a space of comfort and humility and making people smile and adding humor to it, but not saying it's funny because you have hemorrhoids. Hemorrhoids can be funny, but without shaming people.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Right. I think it's brilliant and it is a fine line. And that's what I learned at that moment. He just had the right delivery. I mean, I guess that's good for an OB - GYN.

CARLI ROTH: Absolutely. That's what you want.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And I had the right deli platter. Everybody was really happy and we forged a great relationship, working relationship back and forth. So hemorrhoid is how you started and it's sort of community and products, right?

JOSHUA KATZ: Yeah. I mean, I think ultimately our products are at the center and the products have to work for the people that we design and build them for. But building off of Carly's note around humor and levity, those are entry points into a conversation that needs to be had in order for people to understand what to use and when when it comes to medical products like the ones we make, but also the lifestyle modifications and other things that people can do to either prevent or minimize the severity or duration of hemorrhoids. And so as Carly said, we try to have fun with but not make fun of these topics because it is one entry point into something that oftentimes most people have not been led into.

JOSHUA KATZ: But we also have to meet them there with trusted products and trusted information. So in addition to Carly and I, we have a founding partner and medical advisor named Dr. Wendy Labret, and she is amazing, a double board certified gastroenterologist that also happens to be one of the most followed GI docs on TikTok. So she has been instrumental not just in fortifying our technical understanding of all things gut to butt, but also helping all of us figure out how to bridge the gap between doctor and patient or brand and products company and community.

JOSHUA KATZ: So we have aspirations around the idea of community, but we also know that being a member of the hemorrhoid diarrhea and athlete's foot community isn't on the top of everyone's list, but to create places where people can share information or access information and just otherwise not feel like they're the only ones, I think that's the driver of our ideas around community. And it's been fun over the last few months to have our store in New York in Soho, which just on the surface, having a hemorrhoid store on a high street is notable in and of itself, but to approach that as a friendly place where people can talk about the things that they don't normally want to talk about.

JOSHUA KATZ: And yes, they can also learn about maximum strength hemorrhoid relief products and have a little fun and potentially buy them, that's I think pointing in the right direction. Now, I think a store dedicated to diarrhea might have to have different flooring than our current one does, but you can see how the idea is expansive enough to take things like retail. And normally you find hemorrhoid products on the worst shelf of the most embarrassing aisle of a poorly lit, bright pharmacy store.

JOSHUA KATZ: And to take that out of that context and put it into a place where the products are accessible and friendly but honest in terms of packaging, the people there are knowledgeable but aren't talking down to you and put it in a place where there'd normally be a coffee shop or a fashion boutique. I think that is representative of just the types of improvements that can be made on the overall way that these things are talked about or treated.

CARLI ROTH: Yeah. And even having the way people walked into the store and have been walking into the store, just excited to share their experience and understand and know more about the products because they're familiar with the experience and their first time they found out, it's like everyone's got their first time sex story, but we get to hear everybody's first time they found out they have a hemorrhoid story and there's consistencies. Most of them called their mom. There's stories they were embarrassed at the CVS. They couldn't get it out. There's a price check. Josh's real life stories remarkable.

JOSHUA KATZ: It's very validating for me. Not only do I suffer from all of the gross bodily dysfunctions that we endeavor to help treat, but that also millions of other people out there have the

same stories navigating them.

CARLI ROTH: They must be doing something right because I have friends who are like, "I want to get a hemorrhoid. I want to be part of the club." I get it. I'm with you.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: You even got pregnant to try to get one, but nothing.

CARLI ROTH: Yeah, I went to the extreme.

JOSHUA KATZ: I'll tell you, just being in the store and actually interacting with people all day long, the group of people that most vocally communicate and seem to identify with what we're doing are moms. And that's not just new moms that have recently had children, but in New York, whether they're recently pregnant or whether it's been 10, 15, 20 years, they're the ones that usually come right on in and will tell whoever from my team's at the front of the store all about their hemorrhoid story. And it's great because we get to learn a lot and also they've never been supported by any human being that's tied in with a product or brand.

JOSHUA KATZ: And so it's fun being just human entrepreneurs that also have these things that are trying to do things a little bit better than those old stuffy brands that have been around for decades and decades.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: My standup comedy show all about having babies, which is pregnancy, postpartum, breastfeeding relationships, infants, toddlers, teens, tweens, the whole thing. They're all filled with different struggles and triumphs. And it started with a childbirth education class where we just kind of made it fun and we did it in a comedy club and part of it was education, part of it was the improv, and we had beer and we had mocktails and it was just fun. And then people were like, "Wait, we had our baby. Can we come back?" And it's kind of childbirth education. It was called Ultimate Prenatal Date Night, and then we made it Ultimate Prenatal and Postpartum Date Night and then people came back.

CARLI ROTH: I love this.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Bring this back. We still do it. And people are like, "So I'm having my second baby now." I'm like, "It's ultimate prenatal and postpartum and parents of second baby date nigt." And eventually we realized, okay, let's get rid of the childbirth education and just do the comedy part. That's what people are coming for. And we just called it kidding, comedy about having kids. And we do it about four times a year. Amazing. But people have said it's incredibly therapeutic to bring up these things that comedians can bring up that people don't really talk about.

CARLI ROTH: This is Josh's whole point. Comedians have a way of bringing these comedians.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah,

CARLI ROTH: Exactly.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: So it can break the ice on a topic. It can help couples talk about things that are hard to talk about or hard to do and makes it a little bit easier. So I get that feedback all the time and it's rewarding to help people that way. And so I see that's what you're doing with Get Norms

and I applaud it. And I do wonder what's on the horizon, what uncomfortable bodily discomforts are coming next?

JOSHUA KATZ: Well, actually, let me quickly just reflect on the comedy and comedians and particularly standup comedy and how it's actually becoming very much part of the norms world. We like to say that we have two tent poles in terms of the influential communities that we interact with in order to help us reach larger audiences. And one of those is healthcare professionals. So the HCP community, which really for us is led by Dr. Wendy, is incredibly important because helping doctors help their patients and also embracing a new generation of doctors that communicate and interact with patients on a different level and through different mediums, that's a huge opportunity.

JOSHUA KATZ: So beyond just doc talk and influencers, it's just knowing that whether it's doctors are learning from other doctors or even patients are learning from doctors through social media, that's a really amazing space for us. But the other tent pole is standup comics. So not just the vague notion of comedy, but we have been working a lot with standup comics because as you said previous, is that comedians are very good about talking about the things that we don't normally talk about and bringing into light these things that make us uncomfortable.

JOSHUA KATZ: And I think that if you have it at two ends of the spectrum, it's important to bring people in and standup comics are great at elevating the conversation, but then you also have to meet them with trustworthy information and solutions. And that's where the healthcare professional comedian comes in.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Two great tent poles.

JOSHUA KATZ: And everything else fits in between. And so in fact, actually one of our investors is the comedian, Pete Davidson, and I was asked the other day, why is he so into hemorrhoids? And I said, well, I can't speak for him as to how into hemorrhoids he is, but what I do know that he's into is talking about the things that oftentimes make people uncomfortable. And we actually, while we've been in New York, we've been working with different amazing New York based standups, doing a man on the streets style comedy videos because our store is too small to be a good room for standup comedy, but the streets of New York are vast and there's plenty of subject matter to do crowd work with.

JOSHUA KATZ: And so we actually just did our ninth session with different ninth comedian and a really amazing comedian. Also at cats like myself, Louie Katz, I'm not sure if you've heard of him. He is an amazing comedian, a comedians comedian. I highly recommend looking up Louis Katz hemorrhoids, which is one of his bits that from a few years back that I always watch whenever I wanted a good laugh. And so we've got a lot of things in store on that level because as you said, it's not just comedy, but I think standup comedy and that format and that really human vulnerable format is such an amazing trigger for the types of conversations that can and should be had.

JOSHUA KATZ: Doesn't mean we're asking comedians to educate people about hemorrhoid treatment, but if you can start the conversation, then you can provoke the education and hopefully then people can make better choices about treating themselves. And if they have that choice, maybe they'll select norms, but at the very least, at least they won't be suffering in silence. Mission

accomplished. What beyond hemorrhoids? We like to say we're moving from the butt to the gut and beyond. So hemorrhoids are largely caused by pressure on the lower rectum.

JOSHUA KATZ: That's why pregnant women oftentimes get hemorrhoids when they're pregnant, not just through the act of childbirth, but because the baby is in there and it's putting pressure on their guts and lower rectum and all of that and inflammation of those veins, which is what we conventionally call a hemorrhoid. But constipation is really the key driver. And so when we talk about things to prevent or mitigate hemorrhoids, we talk about how do you prevent being constipated? So working from the butt to the gut and beyond is laxative products and other things that both can help relieve the discomforts of constipation, but also help diminish the prevalence of hemorrhoids.

JOSHUA KATZ: And we're also working on some products to treat those funky fungals that turns out I'm not the only one that gets like athlete's foot and jocketch. And Carly alluded to it earlier, really, there's nothing that's off the table for us. In fact, as long as they are conditions that are essentially underserved and that there are legitimate medical relief solutions for. So I get ice dyes three times a year and I've used these same wipes that I buy on Amazon. I probably spend $70 a year on these wipes. Now, one would say you should probably move upstream and figure out why you're getting iced dyes three times a year.

JOSHUA KATZ: But in the meantime, I figured, hey, we know something about educating people about maybe the causes and preventative solutions, but we're very happy to provide better versions of the medical product solutions in the meantime. So there's a few fun things in store.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I love that you're serving the underserved.

JOSHUA KATZ: We're just here to provide solutions for the marginalized and disenfranchised groups. We're the people brands. Gross kids like me.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: All right, so a few things. First of all, I was vetting a comedian for our show and I was watching her a little bit and she goes, "They say that what happens in Vegas stays in Vegas, but I don't think so because it still burns when I pee." And I was like, "Okay, that's hilarious, but who talks about it?" So the standup comic thing, 100%, we should do a show together here. We should merge our topics, but more important than anything else, I want to wish you guys an incredible birth in the next hopefully couple of days or hours. Thank you. And I want to know where we can all go to find more about Get Norms online.

JOSHUA KATZ: The best place to find more about Norms is at getnorms. com, which is our website. I think you, Dr. Berlin, will be really excited to see our own version of a podcast series that we call Totally Normal Conversations. And it's Carly and I endeavoring to do what you do along with Dr. Wendy, who's our founding partner and medical advisor. And there's fun little segments on there. One of them is Carly talks about things that no one else will, and it's where Carly, as very much herself, asks questions related to hemorrhoids and sex and the body and pooping and all the things that I'm too proper to bring up. And that's the role she plays oftentimes. So there's a bunch of great fun, but also very informative educational content.

JOSHUA KATZ: You see me trying my best to entertain people, but also educate people. And there's a lot of really amazing content with Dr. Wendy, who is a very great communicator and

established physician. And I let her handle all the more technical sides of the much needed educational content that we've been creating.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: So getnorms. com. It sounds like a great combination.

CARLI ROTH: Don't forget about Amazon.

JOSHUA KATZ: Oh yeah. And then also -

CARLI ROTH: Head to Amazon to purchase our products.

JOSHUA KATZ: Yeah. Our whole thing is when you need hemorrhoid relief, you need it as soon as possible. So we actually decided to launch on Amazon exclusively initially.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Because Amazon delivers it before you finish clicking out.

JOSHUA KATZ: Yeah. You know the truth that they can do a way better job of delivering you your norms hemorrhoid products than I can from our Shopify store because they've got depots nearby. And so here in Los Angeles, you can get it oftentimes same day. So that's where you can learn about it and that's where you can enjoy it and hopefully get some relief from it.

CARLI ROTH: And follow us on Instagram and TikTok @getnorms from both of them. Social media guy, Devin, does an incredible job with all of our content, and it's a fun account to follow.

JOSHUA KATZ: Yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Carly Roth and Joshua Counts and a little baby soon to be named. Thank you so much for joining me on the podcast and for sharing openly -

JOSHUA KATZ: Thanks for having us.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: This very uncomfortable topic. I really appreciate it. Enjoyed it 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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