Postpartum with Amanda Nordelius & John Russell

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IN THIS EPISODE

After an unplanned home breech birth, international songwriting couple Amanda Nordelius and John Russell return to Dr. Elliot Berlin, DC — because, as it turns out, the birth was only the beginning. This time, they discuss the postpartum experience.

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 returning guests today are an international songwriting duo splitting their time between Los Angeles and Stockholm. Together, they've built a creative partnership, a family, and a life that blends two cultures. In their previous episode, they shared their pregnancy and birth story, including a powerful unplanned home breach birth. As it turns out, the birth was only the beginning. I'm Pregnancy Focused chiropractor, Dr. Elliot Berlin, and you're listening to the Informed Pregnancy Podcast. Amanda Nordelius and John Russell, welcome back to the podcast.

AMANDA NORDELIUS: Thank you.

JOHN RUSSELL: Thanks. Thanks for having us back.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: My pleasure. Okay, so birth was not exactly what you had expected. Things changed a lot from the very beginning to the very end.

AMANDA NORDELIUS: Yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: One might say they turned upside down.

AMANDA NORDELIUS: Definitely.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And then the baby comes, and I think for a lot of us, we do whatever it is that we do for pregnancy and birth. We put in a lot of time, effort, though, and planning. And then the

baby comes with no user manual instruction guide. It's a little life that needs a lot of input from us. And there are various stages of just hard learning curve from minute one, day one, week one, month one, year one. What was the afterbirth like for you?

AMANDA NORDELIUS: I remember when we did all the pregnancy prep and John was like, "I do kind of want to do a class when a baby is here." And I was like, "Ah,

JOHN RUSSELL: No." Yeah. Who do I talk to to get one of those manuals?

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah. By the way, I could tell you not about the baby so much, but about the relationship. My wife, Dr. Alyssa, has a course called the After Birth Plan that streams on Informed Pregnancy Plus.

AMANDA NORDELIUS: Oh,

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Incredible.

AMANDA NORDELIUS: Is it too late for us to...

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: It's never too late. No, I even know people do it before their second baby. The ideal obviously is to do it while you're in that blissful state before the first baby comes and you have more time. But it's a little hard to sell a solution to a problem that you don't feel yet.

AMANDA NORDELIUS: Definitely.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah. And I think the people who do it while they're pregnant always afterwards they write back, "Oh, thank goodness I had that preparation." But it's hard for all of us to invest time and effort into something that's not in front of us right now. So there is that course, but okay, so I guess you didn't do one.

JOHN RUSSELL: And I think we were as prepared as we could be for seeing our baby's butt be the first thing that comes out, the pushing, but not ever pushing out a baby before, so not knowing what that actually feels like. So there are those aspects. But I think the thing that we were most caught off guard by was just when Freya was born, she was unresponsive and she was limp. It didn't look like she was breathing. And then the midwives started giving her mouth to mouth and we were like, "Wait, where was this in our classes or books that we were reading or whatever? We didn't hear about this."

JOHN RUSSELL: So that was really, I think a really shocking moment for both of us because I think Amanda can definitely attest to this, but you hear all the stories of you're going to practice it, you're going to lift your baby up to your chest, the baby's going to come out and you're going to lift the baby up to your chest and it's going to be this magical moment of oxytocin and everything flowing. And that moment didn't really happen right away. That wasn't what we were treated with.

AMANDA NORDELIUS: And I think it was also ironically a part of the birth mantra that we learned is have no expectations and I'll take whatever twist and turn this birth is taking. I'm sure that's not the verbatim. So I think none of us had any expectations during birth, but without knowing it, I had kind of planned this little expectations on when the baby is born, we will have this moment, that will be all the hard work, this will be the moment. But what we had, I guess, forgot or missed to research was that

when it is a breach baby and a C-section baby, very often this happens because their lungs are not compressed. So it's very common that they have to do the mouth to mouth and that they have to rub them to get the circulation going.

AMANDA NORDELIUS: Once again, I'm not a doctor, so I'm sure that's just my expression. So it was kind of expected in a way, but we just didn't know. So we thought the baby could have all the little, what do you call it? The keeping the baby's little -

JOHN RUSSELL: The goo.

AMANDA NORDELIUS: The goo on and stuff.

JOHN RUSSELL: I think that's the correct medical term.

AMANDA NORDELIUS: When they start to rub her and give her the circulation and mouth to mouth, it was just like we thought it wasn't according to protocol, but obviously it probably was or it was.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I can only imagine the expectation is that you have this intense labor, you have pregnancy, then intense labor, and finally birth and that moment is supposed to be the shiniest moment ever where all the feelings feel. The oxytocin hits its peak and you're just in bliss with your new baby. And if it doesn't happen exactly like that, like somebody accidentally wipes off the vernix or something like that, it's already a blow to that blissful expectation. But when it's the exact opposite, when your baby comes out limp, not breathing and needs resuscitation breath, rescue breathing, I can't imagine the panic, the exact opposite going from a oxytocin high to an adrenaline high.

AMANDA NORDELIUS: Yeah. I think it just was such a shocking moment for both of us, which I think once she started to breathe, which I mean it felt like forever to us, I'm sure it was 30 seconds in real life. Once she started to breathe and cry, they handed her over to me. And at that point, I think I had just gone into some kind of free state. I think I was so scared to lose her those 30 seconds that I had a hard time. When they finally gave her to me, I had a hard time accepting that everything was fine, just like that. Now she's just here. And I'm sure everything was fine the whole time. It just looked so scary to us. And then John was, I feel like you were really good at coming back to the moment and realizing everything was fine.

JOHN RUSSELL: Yeah. It's a weird thing I don't really know how to explain or quantify, but I think part of me just had this kind of faith or assuredness that she's going to be okay. This doesn't make sense and it doesn't look good, but she's going to be okay. She's going to be okay. And I just kept telling myself that she's going to be okay, she's going to be okay. It's okay. She's going to be okay. And then I think as soon as her eyes cracked open, just a smidge, as soon as I just saw the tiniest sign of life, I was like, oh, okay.

AMANDA NORDELIUS: She looked so cool too. I remember she looked so badass when she opened her eyes. It was like, oh my God, there you are. She just looked like such a cool baby.

JOHN RUSSELL: And then we waited for that glorious cry to come. And thank God for midwives because one midwife tried and didn't seem to be working and then they passed her around and then finally the last midwife that was there and was able to get her coughing and breathing and crying.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: It's very intense.

JOHN RUSSELL: Can't imagine being in that situation, not having them there. Can't imagine that at all.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: As a doula, I've been in this situation and I sometimes feel like maybe a terrible analogy, but bad turbulence on the plane.

AMANDA NORDELIUS: Yeah, no, I like that.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Or it feels like bad turbulence to me on the plane, but the flight attendants are still handing out snacks, so I'm like, oh, okay, we're going to be okay. Sometimes as a doula, you see this little rescue breath that's needed. You see a baby come out a little bit lamp or blue and the midwives don't panic. They just do what they're trained to do and they take care of it. And then they're like, oh, okay, here's your baby. I'm still green and want that little bag to throw up. And it's like, oh, you don't want this biscuit?

JOHN RUSSELL: Exactly.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I'm not sure I'm ready to accept that biscuit just yet.

AMANDA NORDELIUS: Right.

JOHN RUSSELL: Yeah. So needless to say, it was a bit of a rocky start to postpartum from the first moment we met her.

AMANDA NORDELIUS: It took me a while to understand. I think because of that, it took me a while to understand and fully accept that she was here. But I had to -

JOHN RUSSELL: I was just going to say it feels like there was almost an amount of dissociation from the moment because of your body just preparing itself for something that it couldn't handle.

AMANDA NORDELIUS: Are we allowed to celebrate? Are we allowed to go on with our lives? Is everything good now? It took a while to come down from that turbulence from the plane.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Totally makes sense, especially if you weren't prepped for it. I've definitely heard people prepare couples in the past to say, "Hey, this could happen. Don't panic." Maybe that would've gone a long way for you.

AMANDA NORDELIUS: Yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: All right. I want to take a little break because that's intense. So let me just sit on that for a minute and come back and find out how the next few minutes evolved. We'll be right back. Welcome back. We're talking to Amanda and John. Okay, so your first moments as parents, not exactly what you expected, but it seems like that whole episode was probably just a couple of minutes and then you do get the baby maybe a little numb and a little detached. How does the rest of that first day unfold?

AMANDA NORDELIUS: She basically crawled. We put her on my chest, I laid down and she basically just found her way to the breasts and started to rest feed.

JOHN RUSSELL: It was like a heat seeking missile. It was incredible. She just knew exactly where to look.

AMANDA NORDELIUS: It was wild because we thought, oh, babies don't know how to latch. This is going to be a whole thing with a lactation consultant. We were so prepared and then she just, honestly, she did all the work. I didn't have to do anything.

JOHN RUSSELL: Yeah, she just had the instinct. It was crazy.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: What a contrast from coming out to needing a human to help her survive and then all of a sudden just knowing exactly I got to go get that food right now. Already just minutes old, already on a mission, already trained and programmed.

JOHN RUSSELL: Exactly. No, her dad is very motivated by food as well. So I think it maybe could be just -

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Apple tree situation.

JOHN RUSSELL: Exactly.

AMANDA NORDELIUS: Yeah. But yeah, I remember we did all the weights and all of that, weight checking and had a little craniosacral therapy moment.

JOHN RUSSELL: Yeah. And then everyone left.

AMANDA NORDELIUS: And then everyone left and it was just us calling family. And we had the privilege to do the 15-day, five days on bed, five days -

JOHN RUSSELL: In bed?

AMANDA NORDELIUS: No. Yeah. In bed, five days on bed, and then five days close to bed, right?

JOHN RUSSELL: Yeah, I think so.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: That sounds like a dream, by the way.

AMANDA NORDELIUS: Yeah. No, we actually were like, "If we ever have a second child, this won't happen." So we were like, "Let's really enjoy this because this might be the once in a lifetime." And I mean, I needed it. My body recovered very quickly and I feel like it's all thanks to this.

JOHN RUSSELL: Resting. Yeah. Can't be.

AMANDA NORDELIUS: Rested so much. And we were watching, we had the projector up and John was, he got me this little medical table. It's like medical grade.

JOHN RUSSELL: It's like the little tables in the hospital that have wheels on them and you can put them over the bed.

AMANDA NORDELIUS: He got me there.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, for meals.

AMANDA NORDELIUS: Yeah.

JOHN RUSSELL: Yeah. It's amazing. You can just buy it on Amazon for 50 bucks.

AMANDA NORDELIUS: It was a lifesaver. It was amazing.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, good to know. I don't have to have a heart attack to get that kind of service.

JOHN RUSSELL: No. You get one.

AMANDA NORDELIUS: Go to Amazon. So nice.

JOHN RUSSELL: Yeah.

AMANDA NORDELIUS: Also, instead of having a fixed table when you're nursing, just being able to roll it on around on bed and off bed when you needed to.

JOHN RUSSELL: Or not trying to balance a tray while you're on your bed.

AMANDA NORDELIUS: No, it was the best. That's a great idea. And then we were watching all the Lord of the Rings movies.

JOHN RUSSELL: Extended editions. Yes.

AMANDA NORDELIUS: On very quiet volume because we were like, "This cannot be the soundtrack that she's entering the world to."

JOHN RUSSELL: Right. She was born into middle earth, right?

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Well, those movies are so long. Now I get it. You need five days for the first movie, five days for the second movie.

AMANDA NORDELIUS: It was basically it.

JOHN RUSSELL: Exactly. Yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Was it hard when everyone left after that traumatic beginning? Did you have nerves about now there's no professionals here?

AMANDA NORDELIUS: No.

JOHN RUSSELL: Weirdly, it felt wonderful.

AMANDA NORDELIUS: Yeah. I was like, "I cannot wait to be alone."

JOHN RUSSELL: Yeah, it was really nice. And it didn't feel like... I don't know. A lot of dads that I've met or men that I've met a lot of times are kind of like, "Ooh, I don't know how to touch this small

seven pound, six pound baby. It feels a little fragile." But it just felt like something in me, and I'm sure you felt the same thing, was just like, "Oh, this is mine. I know what to do with this."

AMANDA NORDELIUS: So John just, I mean, the oxytocin that maybe went over my head crashed right into John. I'm telling you, I've never seen him like this. He was smiling. He was moving frenetically like, "What can I do?" It was just wild to see him running around in the house.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Because it's an audio podcast, people can't see Amanda mimicking that guy on top of the car dealership that blows around in the wind.

JOHN RUSSELL: A little tube.

AMANDA NORDELIUS: Yeah. But John is pretty calm and composed usually, but you were so just happy. You were beaming and it was just so cool to see. I was also not sure, for some reason, I went into a weird mind space after birth of some weird performance anxiety. Did I do well? It was really

JOHN RUSSELL: Strange.

AMANDA NORDELIUS: So I was like, "I don't know if I did that well." You can give birth a baby in a different... It was a really weird thing.

JOHN RUSSELL: Who's scoring you?

AMANDA NORDELIUS: Who's scoring this? And she is born, so it went well.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: That's interesting because you are a performer.

AMANDA NORDELIUS: Right. Oh my gosh.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Do you critique your performances historically like that as well?

AMANDA NORDELIUS: I mean, yeah, I guess you're right. I am, but this would not be a performance I though I would ever critique.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: No, of course. But I mean, sometimes it's the training. How could I have done better?

AMANDA NORDELIUS: No, it's probably right.

JOHN RUSSELL: Yeah. It's like part of you felt like you did something wrong or something.

AMANDA NORDELIUS: Could have done it better. Yeah, it was all of those thoughts. And then John was like, "No, that was the coolest thing I've ever seen. I'm going to write this story about birth." And he gave me so many compliments and made me feel like the most loved and seen. He literally made me feel like the coolest woman alive.

JOHN RUSSELL: Yeah, it was the most beautiful thing, and you are the coolest woman alive.

AMANDA NORDELIUS: No, but I honestly think that moment rewired something in me. If he wouldn't have given me all of that, all of the reassurance and just lifting me up like that, I don't know how my postpartum journey would've looked like. I feel like that could have been a little door cracked

into going into some kind of depression or feeling bad about myself, but John was there to just feed into, just give me a lot of love. And I remember I was like, "Oh my gosh, thank you for telling me this. This is so important." And I asked him to write it down and he did. He wrote down basically how he viewed me through birth.

JOHN RUSSELL: Yeah, what it looked like from my eyes, from my perspective.

AMANDA NORDELIUS: And reading that was just, I think, extremely healing. I'm so grateful for doing that. Yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I'm getting a little teary-eyed here. I would love for you to write one about me at some point.

AMANDA NORDELIUS: Absolutely. I'm sure you're mentioned in my birth story.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, really? My first credit. Oh my second, I have that Showtime credit, but okay.

JOHN RUSSELL: Oh my gosh. Wait, sorry. Just because you mentioned it, I love Nathan Fielder and I don't know how we saw, but you were on an episode of The Curse.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah. Episode 10, the finale.

JOHN RUSSELL: Incredible. I love it.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Very random.

JOHN RUSSELL: Yeah.

AMANDA NORDELIUS: I have yet to see this. I do have to see it now,

JOHN RUSSELL: But it's -

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Once in a while, I'll get a weird text. It could even be 2:00 AM and someone's coughing up their midnight ice cream because they're just randomly watching the curse on Showtime and I show up. I'm like, "Wait a second, is that my chiropractor?"

AMANDA NORDELIUS: Ask yourself too. I mean, that's -

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Sort of. Moses the male doula.

AMANDA NORDELIUS: Oh, amazing. Oh, is that it? Okay. I haven't seen this, so I don't.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: All right. No more spoilers. You're going to have to watch it so I get a three cent royalty check.

JOHN RUSSELL: There you go.

AMANDA NORDELIUS: But yeah, that was just an incredible moment.

JOHN RUSSELL: It's nice to know that it counts because you can feel helpless a lot of times as the one who's not actively birthing the baby and able to feed the baby. And I think just having that feedback between each other is just really helpful that I was able to really help and make a difference and that the partnership that we had through that, whatever role I took on and whatever weight I carried was really worth something and really meant something through the birthing process and even the postpartum process. I think it would be a mistake to just check out and just be like, "Oh, she's the one equipped to deal with all of this, so I'll leave that to her."

AMANDA NORDELIUS: Yeah. Or just being all about the baby, which obviously you were too, but you were also able to see me and know what I just went through and coming down from something big like that. It was really nice to feel still very seen in that process. And the first 15 days, John just, I had to recover. I couldn't hold her all the time because I felt so much pressure on my pelvic floor. So John would spend a lot of time with Freya the first 14 days, which was also very beautiful for your bonding.

JOHN RUSSELL: That's nice. I was her mattress just a little bit.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: You guys, honestly, from the first time I met you, I remember the sofa you were sitting on when we talked, and we talk about how challenging it is in our community. We just talk about how challenging it is to take two totally independent people and merge them together through relationship, through marriage and make a new whole that's almost literally like what happens with this permanent egg coming together and make a human being, but taking two independent people and making a whole that's a new whole that you can't picture either part of that whole not being there because it's one entity now. And that's the image I got of you guys from day one, and it's still all the way through.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And it just sort of feels like you have this great teamwork situation where the ideal business partnership, I always tell people, my kids even ask me, "Should I go into this with somebody?" And I'm like, "If you're making a peanut butter sandwich and both of you are peanut butter, then you shouldn't take on a partner because you don't need a partner compete for who's doing more stickiness. But if you want to make a peanut butter and jelly sandwich and you're a peanut butter, you might need to take on jelly as a partner. And it just sort of feels like wherever one has a strength or a weakness or a need, then the other one's able to fill that gap, like a perfect Tetris.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: So it sounds like that was super helpful and impactful in the first days and weeks after the baby came. And in ways, John, that I definitely was not able to do when my kids came. I was that guy, what is this little squishy thing? I'm like 300 times in size and nervous about it. And I think at our first birth, which was a long birth, 42 hours, totally unmedicated except for the Advil, which I kept taking for my terrible headache. I was like," Baby, you have no idea how painful this is. "The doula was almost more for me than for my wife. I mean, she was mostly for my wife.

AMANDA NORDELIUS: Birth is pretty common.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah.

AMANDA NORDELIUS: Yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Even just making me comfortable with birth. And this is long before I became a doula and just useful ideas like maybe you could do this to comfort her. Maybe you could do that. I'm like," Oh, that's a great idea. "But I don't know if it would've come to me the intuitively. And it sounds like you guys have this chemistry where you can talk to each other without even talking to each other.

JOHN RUSSELL: Yeah.

AMANDA NORDELIUS: I mean, honestly, when we initially hired a doula, that was also, it was for John too. It was like we need someone to look over, make sure that John is okay because if John is okay, I'm okay. It's like we're connected and I feel like that is maybe not talked enough about the dad's role in it and how much it is talked about, but I feel like the more support the dad gets, the more support the mom gets. At least I feel like that's how it was in our situation.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Well, in your case especially because I think it's a whole, so anything that goes into the unit, it goes into both of you.

AMANDA NORDELIUS: Right.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I would love to take one more break and when we come back, I want to find out the ups and downs and the things that you couldn't have known without going through it

AMANDA NORDELIUS: So we

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Can share with the group. We'll be right back. Welcome back to Amanda and John. So far got listeny in my eyes two or three times in this episode. Just a lot of emotion coming through here, so I'm hoping I can reach out to Kleenex as a sponsor. You've now had months of parenthood through the evolution. Tell me some of the things that you learned that either were surprising to you in a positive way, surprising to you in a way that you didn't expect that was more of a struggle. What's the trajectory been like?

AMANDA NORDELIUS: So I'm surprised on how little sleep I can live off. I feel like I have sleep very interrupted, but I feel great and it's five months and I still feel great. So I'm just in awe of, I think when you're not a parent and people say, oh, the sleep, you don't sleep a lot, you think how that would look like without having a child, which would be so hard. But then once you have a child, at least for me, I think there's just so many hormones and other things supporting me. So it's not at all as hard as I thought it would be, which is really cool.

JOHN RUSSELL: I don't know what you're talking about. Doesn't she sleep through the whole night?

AMANDA NORDELIUS: Yeah. John is not hit the same way by that. I mean, you are hit harder.

JOHN RUSSELL: No, I don't have to nurse. He doesn't have the same hormones.

AMANDA NORDELIUS: No, but you're also more tired. Ironically, John, he's sleeping the most.

JOHN RUSSELL: I have a vitamin. I have some sort of genetic...

AMANDA NORDELIUS: Oh yeah, that's what it is.

JOHN RUSSELL: Yeah. No function. I don't synthesize B vitamin or something like that, so it makes me -

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I think it might be the Y gene.

JOHN RUSSELL: That's true.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Someone can do crazy things that we can't do.

JOHN RUSSELL: That's right. That's very true.

AMANDA NORDELIUS: But yeah, is there anything you can think about?

JOHN RUSSELL: Oh yeah, tons of things. We didn't know how far a baby could poop.

AMANDA NORDELIUS: Or pee. Or pee. The first couple of weeks.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Very talented. Very talented.

JOHN RUSSELL: Incredible. Six feet from the diaper changing table.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: You guys should have competitions with the other babies.

JOHN RUSSELL: Exactly.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Definitely. No more bake off.

JOHN RUSSELL: Exactly. Exactly. I think neither one of us were prepared to fall in love again. I think that was something that was really wonderful of a surprise is everyone says this love is different and it's something you've never felt before. It's the most wonderful thing, but I don't know. It's like when you find the love of your life, it's like people could explain it to you, but you don't know it till you know it till you feel it. And just getting to fall in love with this little person again was such a beautiful thing and brought so much energy and joy into our lives.

AMANDA NORDELIUS: Yeah.

JOHN RUSSELL: It's a really beautiful thing.

AMANDA NORDELIUS: All her little noises. Yeah. I feel like to me now I just view kids different. Now they're so advanced from the start and they have so much personality from the start. She's so much her already. I can't even explain it. I just know her and that is wild to me how advanced they are right from the start. When you don't know a baby, I feel like you just see them as a baby, but I just see so much in her. So even when she just lifts a finger, everything just feels so complex and I'm just so in awe of every movement she does. It's so cool to see it.

JOHN RUSSELL: Right. And how it's almost like she's communicating something all the time. If you are really listening, she's saying something, whether it's like, "I'm happy, I'm content here. I'm having fun playing," or it's like, "I'm a little uncomfortable. I have poop in my diaper right now." It's like she has little ways of communicating all of these things, and it's honestly so impressive.

AMANDA NORDELIUS: I think we both though it would be impossible to understand a baby, but it is really... I mean, not that we always get it right, but it is easier than we thought it would be.

JOHN RUSSELL: We're definitely guilty of bouncing her for 3 minutes. Why won't this baby go to sleep? We smell her and she's got a full diaper like, "Oh, we feel bad. We feel real bad."

AMANDA NORDELIUS: But a lot of times, at least, yeah, she's very communicative.

JOHN RUSSELL: Yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I remember my oldest, when I would take him for walks in the stroller, and he was just a few months old, probably five months like Bray is now. And I don't know, a firetruck would go by and his expression, he would just literally light up and be so excited and taken like, "What is that?" And for me, how many times does a firetruck go by? I don't even notice it with all the lights and sirens and everything and the big horn. And it definitely opened up something in me to be more aware, more perceptive, and just taking in the things around me, being more present, being more mindful. They're mindful of everything because everything's just a brand new experience, which I thought was pretty cool.

JOHN RUSSELL: It's beautiful.

AMANDA NORDELIUS: Speaking about strollers, but that is something -

JOHN RUSSELL: Strollers are a scam, right?

AMANDA NORDELIUS: We're like, "Oh, babies are not... They don't lay in them."

JOHN RUSSELL: Babies don't lay in strollers.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, really? You're having that problem.

AMANDA NORDELIUS: She does not like to lay in it. Have we ever used it for anything else but groceries?

JOHN RUSSELL: Yeah, it is good for -

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: You put the groceries in the stroller and hold the baby.

AMANDA NORDELIUS: Peop come up to me at their house and they're like, "Oh, what a cute baby." And they look down and then there's vegetables there because John is holding me.

JOHN RUSSELL: What a cute gourd.

AMANDA NORDELIUS: But no, we've been very much more present. And I think another big thing for both of us is all the reflection we're doing. I don't think we've ever affected this much about our own childhoods and how we were raised, what were Coming from what we want to pass on, what we don't want to pass on. And there's a lot of healing in that that none of us could ever prepare for. I did pull up a little poem here that I feel like represents how I feel about it. And it's a poem by someone called Jessica Jocelyn. And it says, "Mothering you is also mothering me. And because of you, I have found healing that I never thought was possible." Wow, that's so

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Powerful.

AMANDA NORDELIUS: And that I feel like explains in a way postpartum, I think to me at least.

JOHN RUSSELL: That's beautiful.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: These are all pretty joyous things. Has there been any part of the experience that was a surprise struggle that you've had to adapt to?

JOHN RUSSELL: Yeah. I mean, the sleep that has been hard, feeling really tired. Although once again, she's been quite merciful to us honestly with how much she's sleeping. I don't know why or how, but she just kind of gets it that nighttime is when you sleep for longer stretches. And so we have a lot of friends or people who have babies and they come up every hour and I have to bounce her back to sleep. And we don't have that necessarily. It's more like she wakes mom up to feed and then she falls asleep while she's eating.

AMANDA NORDELIUS: Yeah. Even the jet flag, she took pretty well coming to Sweden.

JOHN RUSSELL: Yeah.

AMANDA NORDELIUS: I think for me it's been the whole postpartum journey, I think have been just giving me a lot of chance to reflect. I think the initial shock left some, what do you say, marks, some early wounds that I had to work through. I did have some really weird thoughts that I definitely just felt like these are not mine. And that's also when I decided to seek help. Early weeks I had some thoughts of, it was weird. I just felt like maybe they will be fine without me. Not that I wouldn't want to be here, but I just thought John can do this on his own. Maybe I shouldn't be a part of it. Almost like I would be, how do you say it? They would be better off if I wasn't a part of it, if I wasn't there.

AMANDA NORDELIUS: And then when I had those thoughts, I was like, whoa, this is things that I feel like I read about that can happen in postpartum. And that's when I decided to seek some help, get into some therapy because I felt like it was weird, but I was like, these are not my thoughts. This is not how I think about things.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: At what point did you start to feel that?

AMANDA NORDELIUS: It was pretty early. I think it was that kind of feeling of the performance anxiety just lingered and I felt like I had failed and I did feel like I just did a bad job. It was just that negative feeling about myself not being good enough, almost like loving her so much and loving John so much and not feeling good enough for them. And then also we did encapsule and my placenta and I do not know. I'm not telling anyone to do it and I don't know the science behind it, but I got told to take it when I had these anxious thoughts and I swear, I don't know if it's placebo, but every time I did, I felt completely normal again. So it was weird how much it helped. It's placebo, I don't know, but then so be it.

JOHN RUSSELL: But I noticed a difference.

AMANDA NORDELIUS: Yeah. John would be like, I would turn to him and be like, now I have these thoughts again. I feel like you would be better off without me. And he's like, have you taken your

supplement? I was like, nope, I haven't. So that was intense, but I did feel like, okay, I'm going to get so much stronger because of it and I'm going to learn to love harder because I'm starting off here in the woods and I don't wish it to be different. The therapy I've done since have been so healing and I feel like the bond I have with Freya today is so strong that I wouldn't want any part of it to change. But I do think it's good and nice to know that these things can happen and you just feel alienated because everyone else is like, how are you feeling?

AMANDA NORDELIUS: Are you the happiest ever? I am the happiest ever, but I'm also two things can be true at once.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: That's an important message. That's very true. First of all, all this, because I do a lot of postpartum care, a lot of people open up about how they're feeling. And I think what's sort of great in your experience is that you recognized it early on and not just recognized it, but talked about it and addressed it and got support around it. A lot of people either don't want to recognize it consciously. They feel it, but don't want to put it into words or accept it or think, oh, it's just baby blues. It'll pass. Sometimes it's true, sometimes it isn't. But if you talk about it and if you seek support and there's so many avenues for support today, then it can make the whole experience not only better, but in your case it sounds like positive.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: You learned a lot from having that experience.

AMANDA NORDELIUS: And I honestly think I do love very, very deeply and hard and I think I just got so scared to lose her. So I think I was just really scared to open up all of me and be vulnerable. And I mean that is parenthood. You have to be vulnerable every day and love hard every day.

JOHN RUSSELL: To learn how to live with your heart running around outside of your body.

AMANDA NORDELIUS: And I think I was scared of doing that, so I maybe kept myself safe in that way. Obviously not consciously, but so working through that.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Y guys had that super scary moment right after birth, but this happens even when things go picture perfect, even when there's nothing that you could look back and critique.

JOHN RUSSELL: Right.

AMANDA NORDELIUS: Yeah, it's a wild experience, but I think overall it's been a very, very special fall for both of us learning and reflecting and growing a lot.

JOHN RUSSELL: Yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I feel like there's going to be a lot of songs that come out of this child.

JOHN RUSSELL: So many. Yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Pray of the album.

AMANDA NORDELIUS: Yeah.

JOHN RUSSELL: Yes, exactly.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Pray of the musical.

JOHN RUSSELL: Pray of the musical. She's very musical. She's already -

AMANDA NORDELIUS: She's trying to sing.

JOHN RUSSELL: Already trying to sing. And this is a funny thing we just discovered. So she loves Disney jazz piano music and we found that it helps her sleep sometimes. But at some point in the past month, she kind of shifted and she just decided she didn't like music anymore, but we kept playing it for her when it was bedtime. And then one day we just put her to sleep without it and she was just out like a light and she was so happy.

AMANDA NORDELIUS: She cried so much and we realized maybe it was the music that pissed her off.

JOHN RUSSELL: What if she hates this Disney music?

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I'm going to have to try a different genre.

JOHN RUSSELL: Right. Yeah, exactly.

AMANDA NORDELIUS: We do have a different genre, but now it's quiet and she loves that. You have a routine and then suddenly they change their preference.

JOHN RUSSELL: Right.

AMANDA NORDELIUS: So she went from loving it to hating it.

JOHN RUSSELL: She does. She can change every day.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: That's my parenting tip.

AMANDA NORDELIUS: Wait, what was that?

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Get used to that. There you go.

JOHN RUSSELL: Yeah, exactly.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: With everything. Sometimes they love mommy and then don't care about daddy. Sometimes they want to come to me and they don't care. Just with everything. I love red now. I hate red. I want this. And just as they get more expressive and want to make their own decisions, it's just you got to let go and let them -

JOHN RUSSELL: Wild.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Let them be them. All right. As we're wrapping up, any final thoughts you'd like to share?

AMANDA NORDELIUS: I want to say I have a deep respect for parents now. The hard work that we are doing and they are doing, we as parents and how strong you have to be and how much you have to love there to be vulnerable. Oh, it's a baby crying.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Now we have Amanda, John and Preya.

JOHN RUSSELL: Yes.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Preya wanted the last word.

AMANDA NORDELIUS: She did. She's like, "You talk about me?" No, but yeah, I'm just in awe of all the hard work and how vulnerable you have to be. I think it's really cool. I feel more connected to society as a whole and other parents. You just see them on the street and you nod. We're sharing the same experience and I think that's very connecting.

JOHN RUSSELL: Yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: You're part of a community now, a group.

AMANDA NORDELIUS: Yeah. Exactly.

JOHN RUSSELL: Yeah.

AMANDA NORDELIUS: It feels really connecting.

JOHN RUSSELL: Well, comparing the cuteness of our babies.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: It's amazing how everyone has the cutest baby.

JOHN RUSSELL: They all have.

AMANDA NORDELIUS: But we do actually have the cutest baby.

JOHN RUSSELL: Really though, I wanted to say just, we mentioned it earlier and you mentioned it, but I think just one, asking for help is so important. Even as the dad or the husband, asking for help when you're having relational problems because it's the craziest hormone changes that will probably happen in your relationship and you're misunderstanding each other. It's hard just reaching out and asking someone else who's a dad or for help or if you're a mom and you just need help with doing -

AMANDA NORDELIUS: Intrusive though.

JOHN RUSSELL: Intrusive thoughts or doing the dishes. Or doing the dishes. Or eating meals, asking for help is so key. Or you feel like maybe, I don't know, possibly I had a traumatic event happen during this time. Reaching out for help as soon as possible feels like so, so important.

AMANDA NORDELIUS: And not feeling shamed. Understanding and accepting is just a part of -

JOHN RUSSELL: She's smiling.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Of the best smiles right now. She's like, "Yeah, reach out for help, guys."

AMANDA NORDELIUS: Yeah. It's just all a part of your human experience and it just makes it more beautiful to have a rich human experience, I think. And it comes with all of these different sides to it.

JOHN RUSSELL: And highly recommend writing down writing it down when it's fresh. That's also really cool because honestly, it's the most beautiful experience I've had in my life.

AMANDA NORDELIUS: Yeah. We both wrote it down within the first week knowing we will sure forget this and we have. No, we haven't yet,

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: But... This is great advice. Actually, people sometimes record even closer to the birth, either the birth story or the postpartum story, and then listen to it a year later. And there's so many details they forgot already by then. So I think writing it down, recording it somehow is a great idea. Well, I take back what I said before about the two of you being a whole. Now that you're holding Freya, it appears to me it's the three of you are a whole. Really, really beautiful. I want to thank you guys again for sharing so openly your unique and interesting pregnancy and birth experience and also your postpartum experience and your highlights. So fresh, raw, and real and impactful and helpful for other people. So thank you.

AMANDA NORDELIUS: Thank you so much.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Tell us again where we can find you online.

JOHN RUSSELL: Yeah. Gluten-freemusic. com. You can find us on Instagram is probably the best place, @amanda. Nordelius or @johnshyrussell with two Ls.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Two Ls. Amazing. Thank you again, and 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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