**Let’s Talk w/ Allie: About Pregnancy and Labor**

By Almetrice Shavers January 22, 2024

Motherhood is a superpower in our society and always has been the backbone in the world. In every culture and nation being a mother is a gift. From carrying a baby for 9 months, the body goes through so many changes, the various emotions that take over and then the indescribable pain of delivering a child. There are no words to describe the pain of childbirth, every woman’s story is different. I can only talk about my experience. When I first found out I was pregnant I was just shocked, I just sat there looking at the test in just disbelief. As soon as I peed on the pregnancy test, it immediately turned positive. So many emotions came over me at one time. I was scared, nervous and then acceptance finally sat in. Leading up until I found out I was displaying symptoms but at the time I didn’t know what was wrong with me. I was nauseous and beyond exhausted. Some people had been telling me my skin was glowing and I was thinking just because I was happy. My cousin Sherika and I worked together and she knew all week I was pregnant but didn’t say anything. When I took the pregnancy test she was the first person I texted and she immediately drove to my apartment. I answered the door and she was excited and jumping around, and i’m like girl what is happening right now. She helped me process my emotions and it was my start to motherhood. You know everything happens for a reason. The same day I found out I was pregnant ,earlier that day I had just put in my two week notice at the job I was at. All I could say was this is a part of God’s plan.

That first trimester whooped me frontwards and backwards. It was only 3 months but felt like an eternity. That was the sickest I had ever been in my life. I think I spent more time in front of the toilet than anything else. As soon as I woke up and sat up immediately morning sickness hit, but I was literally sick all day long. The day I started my new job my morning sickness came in at another level. I would be okay for the day during training, but as soon as I got home it was just horrible. I was going back and forth to the ER to get fluids because I was so out of it. I lost 30 pounds in my first trimester. Whatever I ate or tried to eat always came back up. To the point I was scared to eat and just tried eating just ice chips but that too didn’t stay down long. During that first trimester I turned 28 and I remember I spent most of my birthday puking. I landed in the hospital for a week because my labs were so horrible. I was so weak, my cousin Sherika had to drive me to the hospital because I couldn’t drive too long. She truly was my angel during those 1st 3 months. I guess I looked really bad because people would gasp when they saw me. I ended up in the hospital for a week because my labs were all over the place. My OBGYN didn’t want to say anything to scare me, but I saw the fear in her face. That week in the hospital gave me my life back. I was hooked up to an IV the entire time and it gave my body the recharge it needed. In my mind I thought I had lost my baby as sick as I was. I heard her heartbeat and it was beyond strong. All I could say was “How God, is this child surviving?” That’s when I should have known the type of person my daughter was going to become.

My 2nd and 3rd trimester were a breeze. It was like I caught my 2nd wind and I was able to live life again. It still took a while for me to actually show my baby bump because I had lost so much weight. I was pregnant during my class reunion so I didn’t get to really enjoy it with my friends like I wanted to. At 20 weeks, I found out I was having a girl. My cousin Sherika came with me to find out the sex of the baby and was just screaming with excitement in the room. I did personal gender reveals for my daughter’s father and both sets of grandparents. I had personal onesies made for the grandparents. My parents' reaction was the absolute best and I have it on video. They were beyond excited, especially my dad. I told him when I was a teenager if I ever have a daughter I would name her after him. I made sure to keep my promise. My dad’s name is Joe Nathan and I named my daughter Ja’Nae. Not only is she named after him but both of their birthdays are in February. My daughter was originally due on Valentine’s Day, the day before his birthday. She came like a week early. The 3rd trimester was the most uncomfortable time in my life. My belly really blew up then. I was waddling around and it was hilarious. I was nothing but my belly. From the beginning of December to after Christmas, you would have thought I was carrying twins as big as I was. Trying to sleep was a workout and I was so hot all the time. I had the air blasting in the winter season. I would stick my head in the freezer for relief. The perks and benefits of being pregnant everyone does cater to you. My daughter’s father fed me whatever my heart desired. He always made sure I was okay and whatever I needed, he made it happen. I had 2 baby showers and the gifts and love we received was so overwhelming. I knew people loved me but it really showed then. We were beyond blessed and didn’t have to buy anything. The nursery and closet was well equipped. It was an overflow and I was so grateful. Our mom’s had more fun shopping than anyone. They were always buying things before the baby came. She is almost five now and they still are doing this today lol.

Now let’s talk about this labor and delivery. This is what most people do not talk about and they actually should give some reality to people, especially new moms. So I had my last OB appointment and the doctor checked my cervix and told me he felt my daughter’s head. This was on a Tuesday for context. So we had scheduled to induce my labor that was coming up Thursday. We had gotten everything planned out and texted all of our family and friends the news. My daughter’s father was having serious back issues so I took him to the ER. Everyone assumed we were coming to the ER for me. After that I went to work like a normal day. I had to do some in-person visits and waddled to see my clients. Everyone was already saying Allie you look like you are ready to pop. I told them I'm so ready. When I got back home, I tried to walk to the mailbox like I did everyday for some exercise but I started slightly cramping. So I just went back home and sat on my yoga ball. (Disclaimer- that yoga ball was the best thing ever. If you are pregnant please invest in one, it’s not expensive at all.) I worked on all of my notes and phone calls for work. I was trying to prepare because I knew I was getting ready to be off so trying to be proactive. I still had a slight cramping. It’s about 7pm and I had my last work phone call. As I'm on Facetime with my client and her mom they are asking about the baby and so excited for me. I asked her when do you know you are contracting? She immediately gave me this look and said oh my gosh you are in labor. I started feeling this pressure and then like every 10 minutes these pains would come. She said please start timing them. I told Dexter (my daughter’s father) I wasn’t sure if I was in labor or not. We went ahead and ate dinner like normal. He asked if I could wait until the morning and I said I think so. About 10pm came and I couldn’t take the pain anymore, I said we have to go now. I called my mom in Texarkana and she immediately jumped on the highway to head to me. The pain was beyond any words. We got to the ER and I was trying to hold myself together but I was hurting so bad. They finally took us back to the labor and delivery, then the chaos started. I was having back labor, so every time a contraction hit it was like someone was ripping my lower back apart. I’m not a big crier, but at this time I couldn’t help the tears because the pain was just unbearable. I was dilating so fast, the contractions were getting closer and closer. It was literally taking my breath away and my mom was holding my face telling me Allie you have to breathe.

Poor Dexter is just feeling helpless because he couldn’t do anything to take my pain away. I told him being present and not leaving my side was the best thing he could do for me. The doctor came in and said your baby is breech and you can’t keep pushing. Well you can’t tell a woman in labor not to push. My body was literally pushing on its own. Let’s rewind it back. I asked for an epidural and was told I couldn’t have one until I left a urine sample. When my body was truly activated for labor I was pooping, peeing and throwing up at the same time. Sorry TMI, but we have to talk about these things. So since I couldn’t get an epidural I am feeling literally everything. I was ready to die because this was just beyond what I could have imagined. So they are trying to prepare me for an emergency C-section, which I absolutely did not want. They tried to do a spinal tap and it wouldn’t go through and they tried twice. They took me in a separate room while my mom and Dexter waited. As I'm laying there so many emotions are going through my head, mainly fear and confusion. They keep telling me not to push but I can’t help and I feel this gush of water. My water has finally broken and then I have this other push. Then I feel something dangling. I tell them I feel something and they say maybe it’s the umbilical cord. No, it's my daughter’s foot hanging out. Next thing I know they lift me up, I push and I’m screaming at the same time. My daughter was born right there. At this point I'm exhausted and I just lay there on the table. It was a couple of seconds before I heard my daughter cry, I held my breath until I did. Once I heard that little cry I exhaled. Never did I think I was capable of something miraculous like this. Then comes postpartum that no one talks about a lot either. I had to be stitched up because I tore in my vagina, I honestly don’t remember feeling anything. I think it was an hour after I had my daughter the nurses had me get up and walk to the bathroom. My legs felt like jello. Trying to breastfeed was definitely a challenge and hurt so bad. Everytime my daughter tried to latch on it hurt so bad, I can’t even explain the pain. I was able to breastfeed for one day and that was it. I just couldn’t handle it. I asked for a lactation coach but she wasn’t much help. It is one of my biggest regrets, not continuing to try. It would have saved me so much money versus buying formulas. I encourage any woman to breastfeed if you can or use the breast pump. That was another regret of me not using my breast pump.

I’m not sure if many ladies have experienced this but I had what was called a spinal headache after having my daughter. The pain was excruciating in my head. After I gave birth, some hours later I started developing this headache. I thought maybe because I had been sleep deprived and was just exhausted. Before I was discharged I let the doctor know and he let the anesthesiologist know of his concerns. He asked him did you do anything that would cause this. The anesthesiologist told him no because when he tried to do the spinal tap it didn’t take. What they didn’t know was when he put the needle in my back it left a small tiny leak. They told me to drink caffeine and that would make it go away. After going home with my baby it still was a problem. I ended up in the ER 2 days after giving birth because the headache was just too much. They gave me a shot and told me to drink caffeine. The next day I was fine and had no headache. I thought I was back to normal. The next morning I tried to get up off the couch and it was like I was stuck. I couldn’t really move my upper body. I became scared and was trying to figure out what was happening. I told Dexter he couldn’t go to work because I could hardly get off of the couch. I was like I can’t take care of my new baby like this. I immediately called my OBGYN and told them what was happening. They scheduled for me to come in the same day. When I got up I had to turn my neck to the side just to walk. It hurt so much to lift my head up. It felt like it weighed a ton on my neck. We went back to the hospital and I received what they call a blood patch. They stuck a needle in my arm and got blood out. Then I had to sit up straight and Dexter had to hold me while they put a needle in my back to release the blood from my arm. I was so scared and had to be so still. All I could do was grip Dexter’s arm tight as I could and pray. As soon as it was done, I instantly felt relief and the pain was gone. Things got better after this. Postpartum care is what is not talked about enough. Wearing the humongous pad with the diaper and the numbing spray. Women need to be celebrated for this, because this is a different type of strength. I bled for 4 weeks straight after giving birth. What an adventure it was! I would do it all over again for my baby girl. We as women definitely need to educate ourselves on not just prenatal care but postpartum care as well. Being able to speak up for yourself when you feel something is not right during prenatal or postpartum is essential. We know our bodies better than anyone, so sometimes we have to speak for ourselves. If you are able to find a community to help you please do, it truly makes a difference. It can be a few people, friends or family. Maybe they can take turns giving you a break, cleaning up your home, cooking or even just allowing you to nap for a little bit. It truly helps more than people realize. Like I always say, it really does take a village. Postpartum depression is no joke and should be taken seriously as well. That’s another reason I say get you a few people you trust, you may be able to confide in them or they may see something in you that’s off and bring it to your attention. I’m so thankful I didn’t suffer from it but I know a lot of new mommies and veteran mommies that did suffer with it. Someone that has had multiple children and never dealt with it until maybe their final pregnancy. Women shouldn’t be ashamed and they shouldn’t be looked down on for it.