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0:00:02.3 Nicole Antoinette: Welcome to the pop-up pod a new podcast that's similar to a pop-up shop or a pop-up restaurant, in that it's sporadic. Sometimes it's here and sometimes it's not. Each 12 episode season dives deep into a single question, and our question for season one is this, "Should I get married?" I'm your host, Nicole Antoinette, 36 years old, divorced, close friends with my former spouse, child-free by choice, self-employed, almost three years into a committed romantic relationship with a guy I love, and I'm genuinely unsure of how I feel about marriage, at least for myself. This uncertainty got me thinking, how do other people really feel about their own relationships? What's working, what's not working, let's find out. Twelve episodes, 12 different people, honest conversations about the joys and struggles of long-term romantic relationships.

0:00:57.5 NA: In today's episode, you'll get to meet Becca Piastrelli. Becca, whose pronouns are she/her, lives in the San Francisco Bay Area with her husband, child, two cats, and five chickens, and she's here with us today to talk about how having a baby was like dropping a bomb right in the center of her marriage. Becca is such a deep, honest, and thoughtful storyteller, and I cannot wait for you to hear all that she so generously shares in this conversation. Here we go.

[music]

0:01:36.0 NA: Alright. Here we go. Becca, welcome to the show.

0:01:38.9 Becca Piastrelli: Happy to be on the show with you.

0:01:43.2 NA: Yes, I was just saying to you before we started recording, it's always funny, the conversation before the conversation, that one of the reasons that I'm so looking forward to this is because our experiences and choices when it comes to particularly having kids are different, and I love having conversations with people who have made different choices. I feel like there's a lot of richness there.

0:02:06.3 BP: Yes, being a new parent and noticing how we all sort of go into our little spaces of sameness, which sometimes feels really good and nourishing, what I crave is the diversifying of our spaces and always, and to just be talking to the people who are never gonna have kids, you know? And feeling like we can all be supportive of each other through the seasons of our life and not do life separately.

0:02:32.5 NA: Yeah, well, the support is an interesting thing, because I'm choosing not to have kids, but there's plenty of kids in my life, whether it's friends or family members, and when someone goes through something that you have never experienced, whether it's a type of grief or a celebration, having kids, there's so many different things that happen in our lives, and if we aren't in conversation about how to support people whose experiences are different from ours, I agree with you, that it can get really siloed.

0:03:00.9 BP: Yeah, I particularly feel the grief of that, being 18 months postpartum when we're

recording this, of just feeling like wanting the folks without kids, [chuckle] particularly 'cause the folks with kids are... It's full on. To be... I mean, I want to be supported by them and really remembering when I didn't have kids and seeing the need for support by my friends with kids and being like, I don't know what to do with my hands, kind of a feeling. So I remember that, and I'm like, Okay, how do I ask for the help? How do I express what I'm going through? Because I have empathy for that time when I didn't understand it.

0:03:46.1 NA: We are gonna get into all of that, but perhaps let's backup for a moment, and I would love for you to introduce yourself by way of a relationship bio. So think of this as less what do you do and more who and how do you love?

0:04:04.8 BP: My name is Becca Piastrelli. Hello. I am doing the family thing with my partner, Tim, who I am married to for 10 years, been with for 17 years, 16, around then. And we have a child, her name is Atlas, she's 18 months old. And we have beloved animals, two cats, five chickens, and I am in the devotional practice of re-villaging in community, so beloved friends, beloved family, beloved chosen family. Love of relating is a practice I'm really calling in, particularly as the pandemic wanes, particularly as a new mother, which is basically... Which I'll talk about. I'm a whole new human. And realizing the love and care for one another is extremely difficult and what I care about most.

0:05:14.6 NA: Yeah. Yeah, that's really beautiful. So when I first invited you to be part of this series, you said, "I wanna talk about how having a baby is like throwing a bomb into your marriage," which like big LOL to that. We're definitely gonna get into the details of that, but first, I would love for you to tell me why you decided to get married.

0:05:35.2 BP: Great question. Okay, so I'm transporting myself back to my early 20s. I got married when I was 25, and I remember reading Elizabeth Gilbert's *Committed*, 'cause everyone was talking about that.

[chuckle]

0:05:52.9 NA: No, that was funny, I was just tapping my nose, that's my sign for me too, me too, because yeah, I read that and I recently re-read it in advance of this podcast, so I'm sorry to interrupt you, continue, go ahead.

0:06:03.9 BP: No, totally. Yeah, 'cause we're all like, *Eat Pray Love*, woo-hoo, and then it's like, Oh, she married that guy from Bali. And then I read that book and that book kinda like, whoa, I mean, I was 23, and I was just like, Okay. And I just remember, I don't have the quote, but I just remember essentially her saying in this book like, "Choosing to get married doesn't change like the..." I think she said, gossamer thin fragility of this institution... No, not institution. Basically speaking to a relationship is fragile and tender and vulnerable and choosing to get married doesn't change that. And I remember just being kinda scared, kinda scared of it, and engaging in conversations with Tim around it, and then ultimately wanting to feel like we were in some sort of sacred union.

0:07:00.5 BP: So I think the whole "getting married thing" for us was about the ritual of committing to each other in which we sort of felt... We're not religious, so it wasn't like "in the eyes of God" or anything. And then it was the tax, the tax benefits. I remember our CPA talked to us about it and we were like, Okay, 'cause we're pretty sure we wanna do life together. We'd been together five years so, yeah, just a couple of young kids saying yes to a lifetime they had no idea about, and it felt really sweet. It felt really sweet.

0:07:38.9 NA: So it sounds like you talked to a tax professional. Did you do any other pre-marriage, whether it's either counseling or? I mean, I feel like I basically YOLO got married, and now I'm divorced, so whatever. But I am thinking now... Obviously, I'm doing an entire podcast series about this idea of should I get married again? But part of that is if I were to do that, I think I would. I don't know if it would be couples counseling or something, but I think I would want some kind of framework for talking about what that would look like, and I'm curious if that's something that you did.

0:08:14.1 BP: Oh yeah. I think three years into our relationship, we had like a make or break moment. And I totally ultimatumed him and said either we break up or we go to couples counseling, and then we discovered we loved couples counseling. So that was like an early on thing we both realized. Having a neutral third party is very helpful, and then I googled marriage prep workshop, San Francisco, and it was called marriageprep101.com, and probably giving them hits if they're even still around. It was like a weekend in San Francisco with a bunch of other couples. It was so funny and awkward, especially when we talked about sex, everyone was like, "Wooo." But it was cool. They took us through all these different areas where they made sure we had conversations like money, family, sex, expectations, and then you sort of made a mission statement, and we found that to be helpful.

0:09:11.8 NA: Tell me more details. Do you remember either what was in the mission statement or was there anything...

0:09:15.7 BP: Nope.

0:09:16.1 NA: Okay, so you don't remember that. Great, so mission statement is working well. But, was there anything that came out of that that was surprising for you or particularly fruitful?

0:09:25.0 BP: Yeah, the money conversation was really, really important. And at the time, we were both like corporate hustling, and we had an idea of how things would go, but they really... The facilitators, I remember, really pressured us to talk about situations where one would be supporting the other, whether due to job loss, sickness, children, and that was so triggering. And we were both so glad we played out scenarios because then they ended up happening in which we could just be like, "Oh yeah." And talking about, do we wanna merge bank accounts? Like, how do we feel about each other's spending? How do we feel about... I remember from that day on, we merged our bank account and we created slush funds for each other so that there would be areas of spending where we wouldn't judge each other's spending. And that was recommended at the workshop, and I

thought that was really helpful. And then kids, talking about kids, and at the time, we weren't sure we were gonna have them. So that was a way longer conversation, but we at least talked, we set the tone for we want to make space to have a conversation and not make a decision.

0:10:40.1 NA: Were you both unsure about kids at that point?

0:10:43.3 BP: Yes, I was... At the time, I had just graduated from graduate school, and I was steeped in climate change research, and I was just like, No way, no way is this safe to bring a child into. And Tim, who gave his permission to share this, we had to have a talk before I recorded with you, which I was glad we did, yeah, I just came from a really unstable family system in which healthy marriage was never modeled for him and healthy parenting was never modeled for him, so he was just like, "I don't think I'd be good at it." So that was the starting place.

0:11:25.3 NA: Yeah. How did you celebrate your marriage? Like what was and wasn't important to you when it came to ritualizing that part of your relationship? Because you mentioned before that one of the reasons that you wanted to get married was that ritualizing, sacred commitment, that aspect of it. What did it actually look like when you did it?

0:11:45.5 BP: Oh my God, I would do it so different now.

0:11:48.2 NA: I wanna hear that too. Great. Yes, tell me everything.

0:11:50.1 BP: Yeah, I mean, I was like 25, really caught up in the aesthetics and the... I think... But there's actually something deeper there about wanting to have my moment to be witnessed in a right of passage. And maybe I wouldn't have said those words then, I maybe would have been like, I want my day. And you know, I want my moment, I wanna be seen, I wanna feel like it's important and meaningful. And now I would use these words, I wanna be witnessed, and I want a commitment in which all of our community witnesses us and holds us in that. And I want to give back to those who have supported this relationship and throw them a big party and feast and dance, and hold sparklers in the air and... Yeah, that's really what the essence of it was like having my friend who's a beautiful singer sing over us and having my aunt who just like we both love so much, wrap our hands, we handfasted, which is a traditional... I have Scottish ancestry, and Tim said no to a bag piper, so I was like, then we're handfasting, and so to wrap our hands in a rope and just... And at the time, we said, we'll recommit every year because that's like an ancestral tradition.

0:13:13.4 BP: Before marriage was a contract, it was renewed every year, particularly in those of us with European lineage, and we do that sometimes. But I can really see now how in a culture that has had most of our rituals and rites of passage stripped from us, some have remained, and really the big one is weddings. Weddings, baby showers, funerals... You know, we as human beings go through so many massive life transitions and what helps us move through them and into the next phase where we are seen as changed and we feel changed is through witnessing and ritual. So, I can see how we did that, even though I wouldn't have had the words then.

0:14:06.4 NA: Yeah, this makes me think. So when I got married, we eloped. There were multiple

reasons for that, partially financial, partially, I really don't like being the center of attention, there's like something about... And could we have found a way to do it our own way? Sure, 'cause what you just described sounds truly beautiful, and there is part of me that wants that witnessing or that kind of ritual, that rite of passage, and I think I could articulate now what it is that I want about that more than I could have back then. But it was almost like, what you said about our culture being stripped of so many rites of passage and the wedding being one of the only ones that we're left with. And sort of outcome of that for me is that I feel like there's too much pressure then on the wedding. And when I started to think about hosting or putting together something like that, I felt my whole body just... It was this like anxiety... Whatever benefit I would have gotten out of it at the time was far outweighed by the pressure and the expectations, and I don't regret not doing it, because I couldn't get past what felt like, yeah, just a lot of pressure.

0:15:20.9 BP: Yeah. You asked what I would do differently. I would have had a private ceremony before, just like me, him and the trees as my witness and the clouds and the earth, to really seal that in, because I... Yeah, and I would have invited way less people, and I would have cared less about what people thought, and I would have worn a more outrageous outfit, and I would have spent less money on booze and you know, like all these things where I was trying to please... Yeah, and I remember during our first dance, I totally freaked out, and I cut the song early, 'cause I was like, No, no, no, this is too intimate, and you... You're all looking at me and this... This doesn't feel good. And I've always thought about that like, should I have just pushed through, and it's like, No, actually, they didn't get... I didn't want them to have that access, you know?

0:16:17.8 NA: Yeah.

0:16:19.3 BP: Maybe we should have had our own private experience of that.

0:16:20.6 NA: So you mentioned that the initial intention was to do a yearly renewal of that commitment, and sometimes you've done it, and sometimes you haven't. When you have done it, what has that looked like?

0:16:31.9 BP: Well, I kept the little rope, which we got at Home Depot, and now I would have ordered it on Etsy.

[laughter]

0:16:38.3 NA: Right. Right. 2022 a hand-fasting rope from Etsy instead of from Home Depot. Oh my God.

0:16:45.1 BP: This was 2011. Pinterest wasn't even a thing.

0:16:48.9 NA: Obsessed, I'm obsessed, it's great.

0:16:50.5 BP: Yeah. And it was like...

0:16:50.7 NA: I love... I'm sorry, I love imagining you in your mid-20s walking into Home Depot, other people are there for serious house projects and you're like, I need my Pagan hand-fasting...

[chuckle]

0:17:01.7 BP: Yup.

0:17:02.4 NA: Rope. Oh my God. Can you describe this rope, like what is the rope that you got from Home Depot?

0:17:08.4 BP: It was like a white multi-woven... It's one of those like, thick ones. I wonder what people would use it for. I'm not knowledgeable in these ways. I do not enjoy that store, but Tim loves that store.

0:17:23.2 NA: Oh, my God, are we gonna have to do a Google after this, it's like, what is this rope actually sold as?

0:17:26.1 BP: I mean I'd say... Yeah, I would like to know. I'd say it is as thick as a climbing rope, like a real...

0:17:32.8 NA: Right, like, you're not getting out of this relationship. [chuckle] Yes, we're fasted together.

0:17:37.1 BP: Yeah. And then I braided it. I braided it and then tied on each end, so it was kinda fraying on the ends, yeah, just like a white braided rope. And yeah, we wrap it around on our anniversary, when we do do it, we wrap it around our hands holding and we say what feels true about re-committing to another year, another cycle.

0:18:01.6 NA: That's really lovely. Without the Home Depot rope, on the last two New Years days, my partner and I have done that of, Okay, we're committing to be together for this next year, and what does that look like, and what specifically are we committing to, and then kinda revisiting that every few months, has been really sweet.

0:18:23.0 BP: I like that. It keeps you engaged. It keeps you intentional. It keeps you present. Yeah, I'm into that.

0:18:32.1 NA: Yeah. I guess, we need to make a trip to Home Depot, appreciate the inspiration. It's great. [chuckle] Did you notice that people treated you or your relationship differently once you were married?

0:18:43.9 BP: Yeah, and I loved it. I relished in that sort of status as married, which is kinda cringy now to say, I really wanted that, I think, to feel a sense of worthiness, right? And importance. Yeah, I loved... A little puke, I can't even say this, but it's so true. I loved being Mrs. Tim Piastrelli. I really just dove deep into those patriarchal things of being owned. I think it felt safe, right? And that's just

the whole history of the institution, is a woman being kept and being property, but in that her feeling like, I'm gonna be okay, because of women's historical, being unable to own property, and yeah, be in command of their own lives. So I felt that, it felt exciting, and then I changed my name and all of it, and then. Yeah, fast-forward, you're not asking this but fast-forward that... All that stuff made me feel sick to my stomach. [chuckle] I really had to deal with that.

0:19:56.6 NA: Okay, so maybe I didn't ask it, but I [chuckle] definitely wanna talk about it.

0:20:01.6 BP: Yeah.

0:20:02.3 NA: First of all, I appreciate your honesty around that what you just said, because I'm sure you're not the only one that feels that way. And it's also... I think it's really important in these conversations to not make different ways of feeling wrong or bad, especially like demonizing our past selves. There's an entire deep cultural history that's set up around making you feel that way.

0:20:25.3 BP: Yeah.

0:20:25.6 NA: And the fact that you said you were treated differently, there is real privilege, not just institutional privilege, but social privilege that comes from choosing to follow the script, and getting married is a huge checkbox in following the script.

0:20:40.6 BP: Yeah.

0:20:41.3 NA: You know? So, I'm interested to hear more whatever you wanna share about that, what the evolution was of the way that you just described that you felt when you first got married, and then it sounds like that shifted.

0:20:51.3 BP: Yeah, well, Tim and I have joked that we have been... We've had many iterations of identities and lives since we've been together, like we are not the original duo that got together in 2005. We've had growth experiences. And really, I mean, through education, right, on the history of patriarchy through education and my own life journey, I had a real, I don't love this term right now but like "awakening" where I... I remember I had a realization around the name thing, where I looked at my family tree, and I saw all these women. I was really connected to the women of my lineage, which is what I do in my work, is ancestral connection stuff. And I looked at all these women and I was like, "Oh, they all have their father's names, and then their husbands names, which are passed on to their children. So they are lost," because in my settler colonial European aristocratic lineage, they weren't even... Their first... It was like Mrs. George Root, Mrs. Frederick, whatever, you know? It was like, "Oh, they don't... They're erased. They are fuckin' erased."

0:22:17.6 BP: And that, I realized I had done that. I had done that in taking my husband's last name. And then now I have a child, a daughter, with his last name. And so I was infuriated and grieved. I mean, I could just cry thinking about it. It's just like, "Oh my gosh, I'm participating in this." And we had to talk about it 'cause I was like, "I wanna change my name back," but then it's like, "To what, my dad's name?" [chuckle]

0:22:49.3 NA: Right.

0:22:50.3 BP: Well, then I know of people... I've known people who, yeah, create their own last name. And then I really had to hear Tim, because I didn't have like a real attachment to my dad's last name, talk about the importance of creating a new story for Piastrelli, just given the ancestral trauma. And then we went to Italy together to the lands his family was from, and it just felt good. It felt good, and I've settled. I've settled into it. And there's nuance there. And there's like... It's bitter sweet. But it's the choice I've made. But yeah, it rocked my world for a while.

0:23:33.3 NA: How long ago was that?

0:23:35.1 BP: I think maybe eight years ago.

0:23:36.6 NA: Okay, yeah.

0:23:36.6 BP: A couple years into being married, yeah.

0:23:38.6 NA: Yeah. That's... It sounds like that feeling took you by surprise.

0:23:44.6 BP: Shocked me, yeah.

0:23:46.6 NA: Yeah. Whoo, I'm deep in my own ancestral research right now and thinking so much about names and naming. And I've mentioned this in a couple other episodes, but I changed my name when I got married just because that's what you do. And I also didn't really have a strong connection to my dad's last name. And when I got divorced, I kept it because it was already my name, and we had... We're really good friends, and so I didn't have kind of that painful aspect of it. And now that I'm three years post-divorce, and he's getting remarried, there's... I don't know, there's like something... And not related to the "getting remarried," that's just kind of an "also and I'm..." But thinking about, what name do I choose for myself as a last name, especially given that my first and middle name is all I've ever used publicly, like Antoinette's my middle name? And do I want to just remove the last name entirely? Do I wanna pick something from deeper in my family lineage? There's no right or wrong answers, but it's... I'm actually having a lot of fun, and there's a lot of curiosity in thinking about it, and I'm not in any rush, and the amount of paperwork that it would entail, right? [chuckle] But.

0:24:58.6 BP: I know several people, who post-divorce, have chosen their own last name, and it's so cool. Madison Morigan did that. Lara Veleza Vesta did that. They've both talked about it on the podcast. Yeah, I think it's a cool option.

0:25:15.6 NA: Yeah.

0:25:17.6 BP: Can you share a couple of the things that you feel like you gained from getting married, and a couple of things you feel like you lost? If either of those feel true.

0:25:28.6 NA: I've gained financial security. I have partner privilege, particularly because I decided to become a creative entrepreneur and had the security to fail a bunch of times in that. That was like a gift and a privilege. And I was able to build a brand and get a book deal, all because of that. I'm able now. I'm in the midst of navigating postpartum mental health stuff, and I've been able to back off of work because of that. You know?

0:26:08.1 BP: What else have I gained? In my marriage, I really feel both of us in like... We're just like, really in the devotion and commitment, you know? I don't feel either of us having one foot in, one foot out, for whatever reason. I think in Tim's case, again, he gave permission to share, it's because like, there's such a history of infidelity with his parents that he's just like I'm in. So in that way, there's a real... It's gifted us both a real permission to evolve, to be like, Okay, you're gonna be there, who am I becoming? And what am I interested in? And all of that as far as identity and interest and experimentation and all of that, that's been really great. I'm just realizing that now in a deep way, how I've been so many versions of myself and he's been so many versions of himself, and we've just always had the partnership, which I would attribute to the ritual that came with getting married. I don't think you need to be married to have that security and that commitment, but that's what we did. Yeah, I'd say give me those.

0:27:19.8 NA: Yeah. It's about everything you say, I like... There's more questions that I wanna ask you, and obviously we will talk about the baby stuff, but a couple more questions from what you just said that came up. So you mentioned that you feel really committed, really devoted, and you spoke a little bit about what you think makes him feel that way, what makes you feel that way? Why do you feel so devoted or what keeps you devoted? Is devoted something like a state of devotion? Is that easeful for you? Is that something that you have to work at?

0:27:45.1 BP: Yeah, I like him, you know? It's like... It's easy to say like, we love each other, but I think before that, it's like, I enjoy him, you know? I like him enough to be around him. At the very sort of base of it, I was like, can you be around each other for a long time? And yeah, it's really good for us to get breaks, but pandemic child, not happening right now, so there's just like a way we... That keeps me around. And then, yeah, the devotion piece, I think is because I made a commitment, a sacred commitment that I think I'm... Of the two of us, I'm the one who could potentially be a little more jumpy around it, but there's something so rude... I take the ritual so seriously, I take the ceremony so seriously, and I trust that we can talk, because we have... Like, therapy has been the through-line of our entire, I'd say the last 14 years. We have this baseline of being like, telling the truth.

0:28:57.3 NA: And you have a similar language in which to do that if you've been practicing that in like a therapeutic context. Yeah.

0:29:02.8 BP: Yeah. Yeah.

0:29:05.1 NA: So going back to that pre-marriage 101-weekend workshop thing that you went to and all the different topics that you were facilitated and discussing, was the aspect of monogamy as

a choice, was that something that you talked about there?

0:29:21.8 BP: I had no idea about polyamory or non-monogamy then, and it felt particularly scary.

0:29:27.1 NA: Okay.

0:29:27.8 BP: You know? So, it was just like, not a thing.

0:29:30.8 NA: Okay. Has that since been a thing that you have either talked about or revisited?

0:29:36.3 BP: Yeah, because what... I'm in my late 30s and friends around me have chosen non-monogamy or opening their marriages, and we've just been like, what? And so we've been learning from beloveds who have made different choices besides monogamy in marriage. Yeah, I think we talk about it in a way of like, researchers, like, Oh, hmm, look at that, and what do I think about that? And, yeah. And yeah, we are monogamous, and I think that's a real feeling of, particularly with a baby, something that feels the safest. And I think the root of a lot of that stuff has to do with attachment. And we both, I don't think, feel fully securely attached in opening.

0:30:32.7 NA: Yeah. So, you mentioned that you weren't sure if you wanted to have kids, and he wasn't sure if he wanted to have kids. I'm interested in then how that decision came to be.

0:30:48.2 BP: My body, biology. It shocked me really. I'd say... So we got married when I was 25, around 31... No, around 30, I was like, Oh, we should probably start trying, 'cause I was like, No, no, no. Career, adventure, travel, like, we just went full out on career and travel for the first five years of our marriage. And then I started to feel like the societal pressure, and then that led to like, Oh no, I want one. I started seeing little babies and crying in public. Like, I would just cry when I saw mothers and children. It just got so tender, the desire. And then I was like, Is this me, or is this just evolution and [chuckle] like, I wanna make con... I wanna consciously conceive. I don't wanna have my body decide for me, which some people, that happens, you know? And so, then we started trying, and it was like, very scary. We were like, what are we doing? But I know that he did it because I wanted, and he was like, Okay, I'm scared, but I'll do it.

0:32:07.6 BP: And then we had a lot of miscarriages. We had three years of heartbreak and pregnancy loss. And that just sealed the deal for us, it made it so... Our choice was crystallized like, we want a baby, because we lost babies. So, I'm grateful for that, because I know a lot of people are like, I mean get pregnant by surprise or... And that was... And then they have to like make that choice, and it's so terrifying and we never had that. We were like, We want a child. We want... We had to work for three years, so by the time I got pregnant, it was like, very much wanted. And prepped for and planned for. We had worked through our stuff, enough to be like, "We want this child."

0:33:07.0 NA: Yeah, so during those three years, were you open with people in your life about what you were going through with the miscarriages?

0:33:16.3 BP: I was. Yeah, that's sort of my style. It's just very helpful, I think for me, the witnessing thing. It's just such a part of my life. Yeah, I was open on my podcast. I was open on social media. And then I was like, "Oh, I'm the miscarriage person now. I don't wanna be the miscarriage person." So I had to back it up a little bit and be like... I had to put serious boundaries up around that. 'Cause it was cathartic. And then I was like, "Wait, stop." I had a lot of people in my DMs about communicating with my babies. And I was like, "No, thank you." That's sort of just like the realm I live in. Yeah. And Tim had to process a lot of it too, with his people and community. And we were really held. We had a community that gathered, and yeah, it was always brought up and checked in on. And yeah, we were treated with as much meaning as someone who had a baby or someone who lost a loved one. It was like... And that was so important.

0:34:20.6 NA: And the power and the value of not making these things taboo, or silent, or secret. Yeah. Can you speak to some things that helped support you during that time, what worked and maybe what didn't work? Obviously the DMs from people do not work but...

0:34:39.5 BP: Yeah, people who had had miscarriages reaching out and both... Yeah, any part of the parental units, not just the people whose bodies miscarried, just to... 'Cause the normalizing of like, "It happened to me too." I just remember needing to hear like, "What was your story? How did it happen for you? How much did you bleed? Did you have surgery? How much did it hurt?" It just helped me, that nitty-gritty getting through. And then people who would ask me like six months later. This whole thing around one who grieves, everyone shows up in the first two weeks. And then the casseroles stop coming. And then everyone thinks you've moved on. And they sort of forget, 'cause that's how brains in these times work. But it stays with you. So I remember I had a friend who would check in with me on Mother's Day and would check in with me on holidays. And that was like, "Thank you." Mother's Day sucked so bad. And Christmas sucked. But yeah, just like remembering me in that.

0:35:52.7 NA: Yeah, so you said that in those years that you were able to work out all of your stuff around the decision to have a baby and that you were really ready for it, or more ready, I guess. Can you shed some light on what were the things that you worked through or... You mentioned when you first started trying, that you were both really afraid. What is it that you were afraid of? And kind of what had to be true in order for you to get to that place where maybe you felt less afraid and more ready?

0:36:21.6 BP: Yeah, there's two main things. One is loss of freedom, which is just real.

0:36:29.5 NA: Meaning that that's what you were afraid of. You were afraid of loss of freedom. Yeah.

0:36:32.7 BP: I was afraid like, "Am I gonna..." I had this business. I was working so hard on a book deal. And I was building something of meaning. And I'd watch... A lot of my friends sort of went before me. And I'd watch the various ways they would navigate it. And a lot of them were sort of sucked under the waves by the first couple of years. Spoiler alert, me too. And that freaked me out. And I was just like, "I wanna keep working. I wanna keep creating. I don't wanna just be a

mom, all the cultural things. I am just really afraid." I was afraid of what it would do to my marriage. Spoiler alert, it threw a bomb in it. And yeah, I was afraid of real things.

0:37:27.1 NA: Right. Yeah, like sometimes we wanna tell ourselves that it's like, "Oh, these are just baseless fears." But there's a reason... Sometimes I guess we can have unfounded fears. But of course, you're scared of all these things. Because all of these things, to some degree, do happen, and you had seen them happen. And I feel like there's something really unrealistic about being like, "Well, I'm the special one that it's not gonna happen to," right?

0:37:48.0 BP: Well, but I had to sort of go there.

0:37:50.3 NA: Oh, okay, okay.

0:37:50.8 BP: To get myself over the line. I had to... Which I'm really grieving now, the ways I had to sort of create a story that I would conquer all of this. I was gonna do it different in order to get me to do it. But that was like mind games. The other thing that really a lot of people ask me about, that I wanna bring up, that I brought up a little earlier is, bringing a child into the age of climate collapse and mass extinction event and rising sea levels. And I live in an area that burns six months of the year. And we choke on smoke four months of the year. It is so gnarly. It's so gnarly and uncertain. It's scary. And a lot of people are like, "How do you contend with that?" And for a long time, it was like, "No way. No way." The next generation is dealing with the consequences of the generations of before and really just like the 20th century mass growth model of industry. And it's just gonna be a very different world. And I just think about the inclement weather of the last five years.

0:39:07.4 BP: And I hold that now as true, and really... I had some conversations with what I call like model mommies, [chuckle] typically be my model mommy, people who I'd seen contending with that, talking about it, and still parenting. And I just remember I had a conversation with someone who said, the world needs more Jedis. And it resonated, I was like, okay, it feels like a deep spiritual longing for me to have a child, so how can I... It's not like closing my eyes and pretending this isn't true about the world, but it's like, Okay, so then how will we parent? How will we have values around this stuff? If she... My daughter's name is Atlas. If Atlas is gonna be alive in a time when things are harder, how do we think about schooling? How do we think about community care? How do we think about survival skills? We think about all these things, it's just oriented us to how our descendants will live. If they're blessed and privileged to live as long as they do, that's what I live with, but it is a grief, it is a grief to have given birth to the next generation in this time.

0:40:34.2 NA: Yeah, I pulled... I have a series of listener questions that people put forth for this series, it's so interesting that you started to talk about that, because the question that I pulled for this for you, someone says, "I would love to hear someone talk honestly about the decision of whether or not to have kids in the apocalypse, between climate grief and so much else, how does one handle the weight of it all, not just for themselves, but for a whole new person that they've created as well?" And I feel like you just really spoke to that.

0:40:58.7 BP: Yeah, yeah. It's...

0:41:00.0 NA: You're not the only one wrestling with this.

0:41:04.5 BP: It's gnarly. It's so gnarly... And in many ways, I've had to huddle in with my little family unit and not get too macro with my lens of what's happening in the world and just be like, "Hi, child, here we are, I love you, I will take care of you as best I can. We're gonna... This is the way we live in a wonder and awe of this Earth," and it's like keeping me in integrity with my... Having a child was a choice to keep myself in integrity around being a better human, being a good ancestor, like I got eyes on me now, I got a little brain and heart watching my every move and learning from every... She mimics the way I grunt when I pick something up. She's watching. And so what am I gonna do with that?

0:42:00.6 NA: Yeah, I don't know that I've ever heard someone put it quite like that, but that's powerful. Yeah, who are you gonna be now that someone's watching, if for whatever reason you weren't gonna be your... Live up to your most idealized values for yourself, yeah.

0:42:17.0 BP: Oh, and I will fail at this, but at least it's a goal.

0:42:21.1 NA: Totally, Totally, it's something to stay in relationship with. Yes, so you shared before about some of the ways that maybe people treated you differently after you got married, did you feel that the same was true when you had Atlas, that it changed how people thought of you or treated you?

0:42:36.5 BP: I don't know, I was in isolation in a pandemic. It sucked so bad.

0:42:41.3 NA: True. True. I feel like that could be a whole other episode, right? [chuckle] My gosh.

0:42:45.6 BP: I've been on a virtual book tour for my book, and I'm like, here's what we're gonna talk about, process my shit.

[laughter]

0:42:53.9 NA: Like a virtual book tour as substitute therapy?

0:42:55.8 BP: Oh, that's my thing. Yeah.

0:42:58.2 NA: Okay, okay, so then perhaps not that question, let's pivot a little bit. What do you wish that people were more open and honest about regularly when it comes to the first few months of life with a new baby?

0:43:11.1 BP: Yeah, it's so hard. It's so hard. And it's supposed to be so hard. I have to say. Maybe for some people, it isn't hard, and my guess is they've got incredible support. What a blessing. So

happy for that. I did not have that, but I had some of it that I paid for, and this is the whole thing around me being like, I'm going to do everything I can to make sure I don't get postpartum depression, and my baby sleeps through the night, and my marriage is gonna be hot and heavy the whole time, and I just had to sort of go there, and so I was like postpartum doula, meal train, read all the books about all the things, so heady. So just like hyper-vigilant, and I love that part of myself too, but then what happened was, I had a two-day labor and birth, no sleeping, and then I had a screaming child who struggled to breastfeed, my body hurt, I was bleeding for eight weeks, and it's like I've read people saying this, but when your body, you know, the embodied... It was a helplessness. I think that's what I felt. I felt, someone save me, someone just come and save me, and every person who was like a professional in supporting a postpartum woman, couldn't save me. They could only give me a little bit to support this.

0:44:44.0 BP: And that's when I realized, Oh, I didn't actually prepare myself because how could I? For like a complete sense of helplessness, which is a natural part of it, where you just need to focus on your baby and focus on your healing, it was just like, smacked me in the face, and I remember I post on Instagram stories 'cause I'm pretty out loud about things, "This is so hard." And just a flood of DMs. That was the greatest comfort, was at least we had DMs in those early quarantine days of moms being like, "I know. Yes. Oh God, it's so hard. It'll get better, but it's gonna get worse first, and I'm here and you can always text me." And then I remember a woman who was my boss at an internship 10 years ago, who I guess still follows me on Instagram, Heather Stevenson. Love you. She was like, "I have an email to send you. It's in your inbox. I send it to every new parent." And I opened the email and it said, "Welcome to the relentlessness, it will end." And she just like... It's an email that was just like, "This will be hard, it will end. This will be hard, it will end. You might be thinking this. It will end." And it was like that email was so what got me through this, because what I thought was something's wrong, and I don't know how to do this. And to have people be like, "No, this is what it is." And that really helped, but it still sucked. It still sucked.

0:46:21.3 NA: Yeah, the difference that you're speaking of, of knowing something intellectually, right? Reading the books, doing the research, even hearing other people tell their stories, the huge gap that exist between that and the embodied reality of experiencing something for yourself, and it's like... Not to be pessimistic, but I don't know that there's another way to close that gap fully. You can't experience something until you're experiencing it.

0:46:48.7 BP: Yeah.

0:46:49.7 NA: And that can be so hard.

0:46:51.9 BP: Oh, I was brought to my knees under the earth. It was like, "Oh, my resilience tools have been mostly intellectual." I talked in a podcast for years about these things, and then to just be like, "Oh wow, I'm feeling really freaked out." And I get it now, I get how people say like, "Motherhood changes you, parenthood changes you, and it shows you what you're made of and you just gotta dig deep." It's like, I don't know. I think about like questing and vision quest and all these, where you're brought out into the wilderness, and you have to just get through it for a couple of nights, and then you're brought back into the community and you're celebrated as changed. I was in

the wilderness, and I was like... And yes, I had people helping me figure out how to breastfeed and bringing me soup, but I was still in the wilderness, and I now, on 18 months later, I'm like, "Okay, it was really hard, and I got through it." I don't feel traumatized by it, but I do feel like, whoa! [chuckle] That was really difficult. And somehow, Tim and I found our way through it.

0:48:10.0 NA: Yeah, I love what you said before that it's really hard, and it's supposed to be hard, because I think that there's something so permissive about, there's nothing wrong with you that it's hard. It's just hard. And sure, it's harder, I would assume, for different people in different situations, depending upon the support networks, depending upon the various levels of privilege, right? There's obviously things that make something harder or less hard, but why would we ever assume that it wasn't gonna be hard? There's nothing wrong with you, if it is.

0:48:42.9 BP: I'll tell you why. Social media.

0:48:46.8 NA: Okay, great. Yes, tell me more.

0:48:50.1 BP: Oh, it messed with me so much, just like the whole thing, conventional thing, around having a baby and then the birth announcement, showing the baby and being like, "Mom and baby are doing great." I need to know more. Has her milk come in? Does she have a clogged duct? Is she still bleeding? Did she have a cesarean? How is she healing? Is she staying in bed? Did she try to walk and then that created a hemorrhage? Like, tell me how you are? Are you eating enough healthy fats? Have you pooped yet? How was it? But you're not gonna show that on social media till like, "Oh, the baby came. Yay, mom and baby doing well. We're fine. We're fine." It's primal, messy, vulnerable, intimate. I get it. You have to have boundaries, but what it creates to someone who's sitting in bed, who has been awake for 14 hours overnight, wincing, because my nipples haven't adjusted to the sucking of a small being on me, [chuckle] we're going there.

0:50:01.4 NA: Okay, I'm here for it.

0:50:02.5 BP: Scrolling, leaving...

0:50:03.4 NA: Tell me all about your nipples, Becca, I'm ready.

0:50:06.2 BP: Yeah, they're great now. They've adjusted. [chuckle] But I'm in a misery, and I need to sort of mentally check out some scrolling. Scrolling, and I'm seeing this picture of motherhood, and then I'm telling myself, because it's what we do, "I can't figure it out and everyone else can." And it creates the shame spiral, and it creates this hyper-vigilance and anxiety that a lot of new mothers have, that... Well, if we wanna transition into marriage, creates a lot of stress in the two partners, because it's really hard to regulate your nervous system in that state.

0:50:49.9 NA: Okay, so back to the analogy of how a baby throws a bomb into your marriage. Where do you wanna start with that topic?

0:50:57.9 BP: Well, I can't take credit for that phrase. It came through frantic voice memos with

fellow mamas, and one of the mamas was a woman named Julie Santiago, and she'd had a baby nine months before me, and I was like, "This is really not going great with Tim. I am so anxious and critical, and I feel so disconnect and so unsupported." And she was like, "Oh yeah. That's right. It's like throwing a bomb in your marriage, just exploding it, right? Total obliteration?" I was like, "You too?" She was like, "Oh, yeah." Anyway, then I text another friend, she's like, "Oh yeah, we still haven't recovered." Like, "What?" Then I get on with my therapist, and she was like, "Yeah, Becca, you just have to lower the bar so low in your marriage you have to bury it in the earth." And I was like, "Oh, so this is a thing?"

0:51:54.1 NA: Right. Meanwhile on Instagram, everyone... They're all wearing matching pajamas, and yeah, God.

0:52:01.1 BP: Right, which is so cute. But like, I'm not saying don't put that stuff, but come on... But who wants to be the first to be like, Tim and I are fighting. [chuckle]

0:52:10.4 NA: Right. Maybe that was a little saltier than I should have said that, right?

0:52:14.6 BP: No.

0:52:15.6 NA: Absolutely, get your matching pajamas. I think what I'm speaking to, in that sort of throwaway phrasing is, obviously, you're texting people and talking to people in your life and everyone's like, "Oh yeah, of course." So the huge difference between the public conversations and the private conversations, and yeah, of course, boundaries, et cetera. But I do think that we do each other a disservice, like honesty is generous, and boundary, the honesty is generous and being...

0:52:40.5 BP: Yeah.

0:52:42.1 NA: So that you're not like, "Oh, there's something wrong with me that I'm having... That my marriage feels obliterated by this baby."

0:52:49.8 BP: Yeah, and the places we go, particularly in times where we are out in the world, which is during a pandemic or/and having a child, and you're just round the clock feeding, changing diapers. You just go on your phone. That's the place. Yeah, that's the place. So yeah, so where do you wanna go from here?

0:53:13.3 NA: Well, so you said that you reached out to a friend, and the words you used were, "Things aren't going well with Tim." Can you provide some more... What did that mean, that things weren't going well?

0:53:22.4 BP: Yeah, so the context here is, Tim has a really intense job. And he works from home because everyone works from home now, so he used to go into the office and, in San Francisco, and now he works from home. I'm so glad he works from home now because he literally would have left in the morning before the baby got up and come home after she had gone to bed, and I literally would have divorced him. No. That would have been the ultimate resentment, so there is a total

blessing here in... When he came home. But he only had one month parental leave at his company. Well, no. They gave him more, but they strongly encouraged him to come back, and yeah, just like the non-birthing parents and parental leave in this country.

0:54:16.9 BP: Parental leave for birthing parents, but for just like the family unit needs to be together as long as possible in those tender times, and I hear about non-birthing parents just having to go back to work at two weeks, and it's like, you're still wondering what happened at two weeks, so we had the first month together, and we were just in the... What time is it? Whoa, this is so intense. And then he had to go back to work, but still in the house. And he started getting really bad insomnia, so he just wasn't sleeping and was high stress. And then I was in a place of such diminished capacity and also isolation. There just weren't as many people coming around as I'd like to think there would be. This was September 2020.

0:55:11.8 BP: Things were not open in California at the very least, and a real sense of people afraid of being around the baby 'cause she could get COVID, so I'm not coming at all, and I'll text you. And it was like... I put a lot of that need onto him, and he was just as low capacity as me. And so we both had needs that the other couldn't meet because we were just in the house together, and there wasn't any going outside of that to get the needs met. Especially when you have diminished capacity, you can't even think of that. It's desperation. It's like primal desperation. And so it looked like criticism, especially sleep deprivation is a special kind of hell, and it is literally used to torture people, and so from a sleep-deprived place, like a total reality distortion, it looked like... I don't know how you are when you're sleep deprived, but it's bickery, grumpy, critical, anxious, hyper-vigilance.

0:56:14.0 BP: And so I was so upset that he couldn't hold me and he was so upset no one was holding him. And then I remember the same friend who said, "It's like a bomb in your marriage," said, "oh well, the expectation you're putting on him is the job of about 20 people, like historically with humanity living in communal structures." And then I remember talking to a postpartum doula who was like, "Oh, it should be four adults to every child so that everyone can get their needs met." And I just felt a deep anger. And that's when postpartum rage came in, which is a thing. Postpartum rage in these times.

0:56:54.8 NA: I don't know that I've ever heard.

0:56:54.9 BP: Big time. Oftentimes, that's how it manifests for a lot of birthing people.

0:57:02.7 NA: Okay.

0:57:03.1 BP: And then I remember there's this amazing book called "Body Full of Stars: Molly Caro May". She wrote it about postpartum rage, and I would read it on my Kindle the middle of the night, nursing Atlas, and it was really helpful for me to see that what I was feeling wasn't horrible. [chuckle] This is... I looked for it wherever I could. But yeah, basically, we're 18 months in and only in the last six months have we been able to bring words to that time, which was like... It was survival and desperation, and neither of us even remotely resourced. And the messaging we got

from everyone was like, "This is normal, and you just gotta get through it."

0:57:45.4 BP: And as people who have always found support and been actively engaged in, "If something's wrong, let's work on it." We just couldn't deal. [chuckle] We just couldn't handle that. It felt scary. And it felt... Yeah, it was particularly me. I was just like, "Is this the end?" And then she started sleeping more, and then we started sleeping more, and then we got back in therapy, and we've been able to bring words to it, but we still have these moments where we're just like, "Whoa." And I'm finally bringing a slower earth-paced view to this, of like, "Oh, just as much as I'm going through a rite of passage and identity shift, our marriage is too." And we are beginning again as Tim and Becca with our child. It's like a death of who we were before. And the way we spend time before, and the way we could navigate time and needs and sex and all of it. It was just a different way, and so now we're like, "Oh, we have to put what we... Put our tools to practice here and begin again."

0:59:01.3 NA: Yeah, it's like that false assumption that you can change a big thing without it impacting everything else. This might be kind of a strange analogy, but I remember the mind games that I had to play with myself to get... In getting sober. I needed to believe that I could quit drinking and everything else in my life would stay the same, and you know, that I wasn't gonna lose friends, that I wasn't gonna have to change the fact that my entire social life revolved around going out for drinks. Thinking about the fact that all of the things that did change, knowing that now, in retrospect almost 11 years later, of course, everything changed.

0:59:38.7 NA: And I couldn't handle the thought of that at the beginning. I needed to believe that it was just like the puzzle where you just take out the one piece, but the whole rest of the puzzle stays the same, and there's something in that, that I needed it to be true, almost like what you were saying there, "I'm gonna be the one who's different. I'm gonna do having a baby differently. I'm still gonna be able to hold on to all of these things." And maybe that is just our way to protect ourselves at the beginning, to even not get over the finish line, but get over to start line. To have the courage to start something, we almost have to convince ourselves that, "Okay, all I have to do is this one thing and that thing is big enough that everything else is gonna be fine." But of course everything else is gonna change. I don't see how it wouldn't.

1:00:23.2 BP: Yeah, I relate. I relate. It's interesting what we do to get ourselves to do brave hard things, but yeah, then contending with the truth. And responding to it, and it requires... It's humbling, and it requires a lot of surrender and patience.

1:00:41.7 NA: Can you talk about conversations or negotiations that you two have had about child care responsibilities? What was that like early on? What does it continue to be like? Since I assume it's an ongoing conversation.

1:00:57.1 BP: Yeah. Here we talk about invisible labor. Took me a bit to really make sure Tim understood. So in his situation, he has such a burden, he really feels, and I can see, of providing for us right now, financially, and working at a very intense job that he would prefer not to work at, but that's where he's working right now. And so feeling that needs to be valued highly enough, so then I

take on more of the parenting. And then me just having this bubbling, boiling rage, that, "Oh, you don't see how much I am working, what labor I'm doing, particularly around..." I really had to talk to him about, "Do you understand what breastfeeding does to a body?" I'm not just chilling in the corner resting, my body is being sucked of nutrients.

1:02:04.0 BP: I go intense. Well, and literally... I learned this from Rachelle Garcia Seliga, who teaches Innate postpartum, a course called Innate postpartum. I had her on my podcast, and she was, "Literally, breast milk is made of fat, and so it pulls the fat out of your body to create the milk and that most of that fat comes off your brain, your brain," which is why we feel this fog, this mental fog, which is why it's so important for us to eat fatty foods like avocados and coconut milk and all these things: Dairy. And then what happens after I breastfeed, is I feel starving, I feel dizzy. There's so much giving of my body and my energy, and then that made me feel resentful because I was like, he doesn't see this whole invisible burden and getting up in the night because I chose to breastfeed, that's what... So he can't. So we talked about bottle-feeding, we got her on a bottle and he would do a couple of feedings.

1:03:07.0 BP: And we talked about me being more understanding and appreciative of the energy he's giving or the weight he's carrying for supporting, but me being, I'm pretty, I don't have a lot of empathy there. I'm actually just so angry and frustrated and feeling alone in this. And so that was a tension that we conti... It's not so bad now, but navigating him feeling unappreciated, me feeling unappreciated and not really having the patience to appreciate each other because we're feeling unappreciated.

1:03:39.0 NA: Oh my God. The cycle, yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

1:03:43.4 BP: And that's right. We're both under-resourced and surviving. So that was our thing that would pop up. And so we just noticed that when we do a kindness for each other, which we know, initially, we know never wanna do, 'cause we're in that place. But of just being, "I will bottle-feed the baby tonight." I will... Or me in the morning, "I will take her, you can sleep another hour. I will take her out and we'll play in the..." These little kindnesses are gifts, and that's really how we phrase it as, it's a gift. And it's hard, and sometimes you don't wanna do it, but it's really nice on the other side of it, when the person appreciates the little gift.

1:04:27.7 NA: Yeah, so you said, it's not just that you are going through this rite of passage of becoming a mother, but that your relationship is going through its own kind of evolution, begin again, rite of passage. I wonder, I don't even really know what my question is here, but what does that look like? Because I feel like that's a beautiful true-sounding thing to hear. And then I wanna ask, but how? What does that mean? What does that look like?

1:04:56.8 BP: Oh, we're still in the liminal, messy middle, so... Great question. I'm just recently in that realization, I've been so... What did my therapist say? Innocent narcissism? I have been so focused on myself. I think because my need felt bottomless, for so long, a bottomless need that comes from... Jessie Harrold, who does MotherSHIFT, a course I took that held us in the mother rite of passage, where she really brought language for me. There was a big theme here of me finding

spaces to be validated.

1:05:42.4 BP: Of really seeing the way in which I have been so focused, and I don't think it's bad, it was just true. I've been so focused on the ways I have felt unsupported, undernourished, frightened, angry, and then Tim has been saying the same thing, and I just haven't really been hearing it, and I finally, maybe two months ago, just was like, "Oh my gosh, I have been a little self-involved," makes sense, but "Oh my gosh. You are a dad now."

1:06:20.9 NA: Yeah.

1:06:22.8 BP: You're a dad. You're a dad who didn't have a great dad, how do you feel? And hearing him, I mean I could cry just thinking about it now. I just feel like, "Oh my gosh. Who has he had to witness him?" I have been calling in... Like the mama stuff, there's so much even on the internet, it's never enough for me, but who has he had? No one. So, gosh, that was just so important for me to feel and for him to see me feel, and for him... And I'm just encouraging him to not make me the place, that he finds the places to... Fellow fathers, it's like getting dudes to hang out, so hard, but he's gotta find places where he can talk about how hard those first months were for him and how hard it was for me to be raging at him and him not be able to fix it 'cause he just wanted to fix it, and I'm like, "You can't fix that." How hard it was for me to not wanna be touched 'cause I was touched out every day. He needs that too, because he has transformed as well.

1:07:45.7 NA: Yeah, something that my partner and I... I was gonna say struggle with, I don't know that it's a struggle, but an issue that continues to present itself is how much larger my support network is than his, which isn't an accident. Like you, I seek out those spaces and really do a lot to nurture those relationships, but the pressure that I can feel on being not his only person, but sort of, in the way that you were just describing, and that from what I have heard, anecdotally, that this is common in straight relationships, and that it can be really hard to be someone's main/only support.

1:08:37.4 BP: Yes, and going back to that realization I had that I was projecting my need of him that really would be better distributed amongst 20 people, how much do we do that in our modern individualized nuclear family? We just live with our partner and if we have children and how much pressure that puts on our partners to be all the things for us. It's really not realistic.

1:09:14.8 NA: Yeah, I agree. So what's your interest in talking about sex?

1:09:22.0 BP: I'm interested, I have to sort of check in with how much... Tim is a little more private there, but I can share.

1:09:28.8 NA: Well, let me pose the question then, and if it feels good, you can answer it. I'm interested since you two have been together for such a long time and through different individual phases, you mentioned a three-year time span of multiple miscarriages, not knowing you wanted to have kids, deciding to have kids, then getting pregnant, then having a baby, then being touched out. I would love to hear, if you're open to sharing, a little bit of sort of what the evolution has been like of your sexual partnership or of that aspect of your connection, whether it's been consciously de-

prioritized at different times, if you've been on really different pages, and really anything like that that you wanna speak to.

1:10:10.4 BP: Oh, there's so much because it's many years we've been together. I'd say, being on different pages has sort of been the story for a lot of it, and I think that's fine, actually, because we're just different humans, and also, I don't know if you're down for human design, but we're both generators, and so we have a tendency to burn out, and burnout will just kill a sex drive. So we have both been in that conversation about how sex is just so important for the relationship and for our nervous systems and how our overdoing and productivity obsession and hustle culture actually is hurting our wellbeing, not just of our bodies, but of our connection. So I don't know if that makes sense, but that's...

1:11:00.3 NA: Totally.

1:11:00.8 BP: Really what we're calling in as far as an anchor of the partnership, it's like we have to watch when we over-generate because that hurts our physical intimacy. Like, "Oh right. Okay."

1:11:11.7 NA: That your energy is finite, and if it's all going into other things, of course, it's not gonna be there for that aspect of the connection. We think... This is another one of those myths that we think it's just magically there.

1:11:22.6 BP: Yeah.

1:11:23.5 NA: And it's not always the case, not often the case.

1:11:26.7 BP: It's not often the case especially as you get older, especially if you have kids, especially if you experience burnout. Yeah, and so it's like can we... 'Cause it has to be conscious, I have to consciously reserve some of that energy. I have to be like, "Okay, actually, I need to save little a bit for Tim and I." And that's something we've been talking about, and then the consciously de-prioritizing it. I would love, particularly around having children, I would have loved someone to have talked to me about this. I remember seeing an Instagram post from, I think her name on Instagram is divinedavana, and she just had her second child. And she and her partner, Aubert, he's one of the founders of Sacred Sons, which is a men's work group that Tim works with. They... After their first child, and the first child's like, "Whoa, things are crazy now," they made a conscious decision to do one year of celibacy upon the birth of their child.

1:12:28.7 BP: And she said, "It was because I didn't want the pressure of having to do that to make the marriage okay because so much of my body energy is going to healing from pregnancy and birth and nourishing this child." And I went, "If someone had just told me that, if I had this... Honestly, Because then... And Aubert's probably doing what he needs to manage that, and then also staying in that commitment, in that devotion to his partner and his child. I can't tell you how many secret conversations I have with fellow mamas whose partners got addicted to porn in the postpartum phase because they aren't getting the sex they're used to.

1:13:10.8 BP: And then the other thing is this six-week clearance, medical clearance, for sex and working out in the Western medical community is really damaging for a lot of birthing bodies because often times that is not true. Maybe it could... Maybe tears are healed and stitches come out, but that area of the body needs more time. The pelvic floor needs more time to heal, and so if there is an expectation of sex between the couple, and then the... What am I trying to say? If that's the way a relationship needs to be okay, which has been my story for a long time. Like, "Are we having sex? Okay, we're okay. We're okay. We're okay." And then it has to... And then the man is... Or the non-birthing partner, is feeling that need, and then they're having sex too soon, it can be painful, it can damage the pelvic floor.

1:14:24.2 BP: It can contribute to a prolapse. It's actually... I always sort of think in the fact that we are animal... Ancient animal bodies, ancestral bodies, that aren't operating at a computer pace. We aren't meant to jump back in, we really aren't. And breastfeeding creates dryness. There's all these things that happen that make it so if you are someone who has a lower drive, like I was and Tim did, too, if we just... For a long time we were like, "What's wrong with us? We need..." Because it was like, "Sex means we're okay." And then I was listening to this Esther Perel podcast episode... What is it called? Where Should We Begin?

1:15:09.5 NA: Where Should We Begin? Yeah, she's great.

1:15:11.5 BP: I was listening... Ugh, it's so good. These couples are so awesome for letting their shit air out publicly. And I was listening where this couple was talking about issues and then Esther said to her, "That's sex to check the box of your marriage is okay, is not actually nourishing sex. That's something different. Your bodies do a thing, and then you check it off. It's not actually connecting." And my mind went... So that's been so cool to talk to Tim about about, about like in this beginning again of our relationship, in this new way, can we bring new meaning to our sexual encounters in a way that is not just ticking the box? Can we go longer times and then trust when desire comes and savor it? Can we define pleasure and intimacy in different ways? I remember for the first couple months, we'd have long hugs and that would be our intimacy. Or our feet would touch under the covers, and it was like... With our baby sleeping between us, and like can we make that intimacy? And that has been a powerful learning for me.

1:16:27.2 NA: Yeah, and can we expand whatever the toolbox or set of criteria is that we used to even see is the relationship okay, right? 'Cause...

1:16:35.6 BP: Yes.

1:16:37.7 NA: It's not just down to this one metric that we've been told, that that's what a quote "good relationship" looks like. Yeah.

1:16:44.6 BP: And it makes me think like, oh, if I really wanna only have good, meaningful sex, I'm not gonna get caught up in how often. I'm not gonna get caught up in how it looks or if someone knew, I'm just gonna be listening to my body right now. And in that way, yeah. It's less. It's less, but it's way less pressure, too.

1:17:09.9 NA: Yeah. How has having a baby changed how you think about the future of your marriage, if at all?

1:17:18.8 BP: Yeah, it has for sure. Yeah, we've been having some really awesome conversations about long-term thinking. I think we've... Before baby, we were so career-focused. We were so short-term focused, like three to five year, not even, two to three year. And the way we'd work out and plan vacations, and next year we wanna hit this income level. And now we're just like, "Where do we wanna live? How do we wanna educate our child?" Talking about investing and retirement. There's just legacy thinking that comes into place.

1:18:05.8 BP: And going back to the way our... Having a child in this time makes me think more about how to be in integrity with our values, so now it's like, "How are we? How are we gonna live this way?" So, yeah. We're talking about leaving the hustle of the San Francisco Bay area. I've told you we're considering moving east. We're thinking about... Yeah, building community, having space for if people are displaced from climate, weather. Could we have a space for them to go? We're thinking about my parents are getting old. Do we have... Could we build them a tiny home? Where are the forest schools teaching how to make fires? This is what we're talking about now, and it's really exciting, honestly, because it feels like deeper meaning in being alive.

1:18:55.4 NA: I feel like that's such a good place to start to wrap up. Is there anything that we haven't talked about though that you definitely wanna mention or bring up?

1:19:03.7 BP: So I just wanna name this fear I have in the catharsis of telling the truth, which this has been, is like, I just have this fear that I'm scaring people away from having kids, and maybe I am. But... Yeah, 'cause I've been posting on social media recently, the raw truth of what I've been contending with, from a mental health perspective, and I think I just remember my pre-parent self being really freaked out and then being like, "Not gonna happen to me." So I just wanna name that, that's happening for me and having the urge to be like, "But it's not all bad", and it's like "Of course, it's not all bad." But yeah, in telling this truth, it feels like, "Ugh. Ugh. Gosh. What will people think?"

1:19:54.4 NA: It's an interesting double-edged thing because you've mentioned at various points in this conversation, the disservice that people only posting the shiny things did for you, right?

1:20:06.7 BP: Yeah, yeah.

1:20:07.0 NA: That it's like, "Okay, so we want people to not just, mom and baby, you're doing great," or whatever, if you extrapolate that out into other things, but then there's the fear of, "Oh my gosh, am I saying too much?" Anyway, just want to...

1:20:19.8 BP: It's edgy.

1:20:22.7 NA: Acknowledge that, yeah, what you're saying, and that sort of vulnerability, hangover

feeling and the desire to kind of like quick come in and be like, "Oh no, no, but it's worth it." right?

1:20:29.6 BP: Yeah.

1:20:30.3 NA: Also, from an outside perspective, no, nothing you have said sounds to me like you don't also think it's worth it, and I appreciate the both end of this. This is real. Yeah.

1:20:41.8 BP: Yeah, yeah. Yeah, I remember in the early days posting on Instagram Stories like, "Didn't sleep, feeling crazy." And then if I got DMs that were like, "But it's worth it though." I'd be so... I'd be like, "What are you doing? Of course, it's worth it. Leave me alone."

1:20:58.8 NA: Yeah. Well, it's like the... Something hard happens and the impulse to immediately jump to a silver lining. That it's like, "Yes. Fine, great, okay. But right now, it sucks, right?"

1:21:11.2 BP: Yeah.

1:21:11.2 NA: And I'm pissed and that... But I think what you're doing in this sort of sharing is opening up more space to just almost like non-judgmentally allow all of this to be true.

1:21:27.6 BP: Yeah.

1:21:28.2 NA: At the same time, and to not like to fight against the urge to put it into a box if either worth it. Not worth it. Hard, not hard. That it's all of it.

1:21:34.2 BP: Yeah.

1:21:35.7 NA: And I appreciate your honesty very much. I would love to ask you two last questions, if you could leave people with one affirmation of sorts, based on our conversation, what would that be? What is your wish for everyone listening?

1:21:57.9 BP: It's to tell the truth to your people and ask for what you need.

1:21:58.3 NA: Yeah, full circle to... At the very beginning, when you were talking about wanting support from your child-free friends who have potentially more support to give.

1:22:06.3 BP: Yes.

1:22:07.2 NA: Than others who are going through your same situation.

1:22:09.6 BP: And please don't come over and just take selfies with my baby and leave. Thank you.

1:22:15.2 NA: [laughter] Great, what is the best place for people to find you and say, "Hi"? Do you have a particular favorite way to connect with new folks?

1:22:25.2 BP: I'm kind of chilling right now, but like, I've mentioned Instagram, so probably there, if you're into that, if you have a healthy relationship with it. [laughter]

1:22:33.5 NA: It's a rough run.

1:22:33.6 BP: Maybe, maybe not. Yeah, Becca Piastrelli, if you type some version of that, the computer robots find me. And then I have a podcast, I'm like wintering right now, but we'll come back in the spring called "Belonging."

1:22:46.1 NA: Which is beautiful, and I love it very much, and it's almost nice that you're taking a break right now and folks wanna listen to some archive posts.

1:22:54.4 BP: Yeah. Get in there. I also wrote a book. [chuckle] I am trying to share with the world.

1:23:00.2 NA: By the way, yes, you did. Yeah.

1:23:00.8 BP: Yeah, If you're interested in... We were talking about different things today, but yeah, rites of passage, connecting with ancestral ways, feeling more connected with the living world, it's called "Root and Ritual. You can check it out.

1:23:14.2 NA: Yeah, it... This could be a whole other conversation of creating more space for ritual in our life, which is something that I'm really personally focused on, and your book has been a big help. So, thank you for writing it. Thank you for this conversation. Thank you for your honesty, I appreciate you very much.

1:23:28.8 BP: Thank you, Nicole.

1:23:38.8 NA: Thanks so much for listening to this very first season of the Pop-Up Pod. All of the intimate and honest conversations you'll hear on this show are 100% listener-funded, paid for by my sliding scale Patreon community. That means no ads and no sponsors, just a couple hundred people coming together to ensure that everyone involved in making this podcast gets paid. That includes me as the host and creator, my sound engineer and musician, Adam Day, as well as every single one of our guests. The patreon community also funds the creation of a full transcript for each episode, which you can find in the show notes to help make these conversations more accessible for all.

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