

Fourth Trimester Podcast

Episode 52: The Twins & Multiples Episode - What You Need To Know If You're Expecting More Than One

Sarah Trott: [00:00:05] My name is Sarah Trott. I'm a new mama to a baby girl and this podcast is all about postpartum care for the few months following birth, the time period also known as the Fourth Trimester. My postpartum doula, Esther Gallagher, is my co-host. She's a mother, grandmother, perinatal educator, birth and postpartum care provider. I've benefited hugely from her support. All parents can benefit from the wisdom and support that a postpartum Doula provides. Fourth trimester care is about the practical, emotional and social support parents and baby require, and importantly, helps set the tone for the lifelong journey of parenting.

When I first became pregnant, I had never heard of postpartum Doulas, let alone knew what they did. So much of the training and preparation that expecting parents do is focused on the birth and newborn care. Once a baby is born, often the first interaction parents have with medical or child professionals, other than the first pediatrician visits, is the six-week checkup with the OB/GYN. *What about caring for mama and family between the birth and the six week doctor visit? What are the strategies for taking care of the partner and the rest of the family while looking after your newborn?*

Our podcasts contain expert interviews with specialists from many fields to cover topics including postpartum doula practices, prenatal care, prenatal and postnatal yoga, parenting, breastfeeding, physical recovery from birth, nutrition, newborn care, midwifery, negotiating family visitation, and many more.

First-hand experience is shared through lots of stories from both new and seasoned parents. Hear what other parents are asking and what they have done in their own lives.

We reference other podcasts, internet resources and real-life experts who can help you on your own parenting journey. Visit us at <http://fourthtrimesterpodcast.com>

Sarah Trott: [00:00:43] Hi, this is Sarah Trott. Welcome back to the Fourth Trimester podcast. I'm here with Esther Gallagher and a special guest, Alli Merriman, who I'll introduce in just a moment. Before we get started, I want to remind all of our listeners that we have a website which is [fourth trimester podcast.com](http://fourthtrimesterpodcast.com), and we have a Facebook page. So if you go on to Facebook and you look for fourth trimester, please go and like our page and join our group because you can find lots of interesting and good information there that you can read and share with your friends.

Sarah Trott: [00:01:11] So I want to tell you a little bit about Alli and why she's here on our show today. So Alli works for a company called Twin Love Concierge, and she is the San Francisco Bay associate for this group. And we met Alli at the birth and Baby Fair here in San Francisco and just connected over the fact that our daughters have the same name, which is super cool and and just the area of interest where she she focuses which is twins and multiples. And she also provides private consultations with families before and after twins arrive. She's a mom to a four year old daughter and a two and a half year old set of twins, one boy and one girl. Welcome, Alli, and thank you so much for joining our show. Just to get us started, can you tell us a little bit about your own fourth trimester experience? Yes.

Alli Merriman: [00:01:58] Well, I have an older daughter, as Sarah mentioned, and also twins. So I had two fourth trimesters for three kids. The fourth trimester with my oldest was actually quite different than I was expecting. Probably same with many of the listeners. My daughter was due December 7th. I was planning on working right up until she was born as a teacher in the Bayview neighborhood in San Francisco. I was imagining myself going into labor while working and going straight to the hospital in San Francisco.

Alli Merriman: [00:02:29] Didn't matter that we had moved to the suburbs because I was going to be probably coming from work anyway because that's where I spent all my time. Of course, by week 27, the I went for an ultrasound and they noticed that my cervix was shortening very quickly. I immediately got put on bed rest. By week 28, I was admitted for preterm labor in the hospital. Luckily, they were able to stop the

contractions, but they knew then that my baby was going to most likely be a preemie. So fast forward I had to switch doctors, OB switch hospitals, all kind of at the last minute. I ended up having my daughter at 34.5 weeks and she was in the NICU for three weeks. So she was born October 30th instead of December 7th. So NICU time certainly changes that fourth trimester.

Alli Merriman: [00:03:22] For one thing, it extends it because the baby kind of develops a couple weeks behind since they were born, before their due date. And I struggled a lot when she was in the NICU because I didn't know anyone else who had had the same experience. And the NICU can be a confusing place. The number one question that all your friends and family will ask you is when's the baby coming home? When's the baby coming home? And what you learn if you have a child in the NICU is that the doctors and nurses cannot give you that answer.

Alli Merriman: [00:03:53] So it's really hard when people ask it again and again. And that's all you want is for the baby to come home. And then the people are asking it, but no one's giving you any answers. So yeah, that was pretty isolating. But we got through it and the nurses were wonderful. And then I came home and was struggling. Things were not how I expected. I thought that as an elementary school teacher, I thought I was automatically going to be a perfect mom. No. So I remember laying on my floor after she had been home for a few days, laying on our family room floor, sobbing to my husband because she would take a bottle from him and not from me.

Alli Merriman: [00:04:32] So therefore she loved him more and that's how it would be forever. I struggled, you know, just being home with her all the time. And luckily everything kind of just worked itself out by the time she was 3 or 4 months. So that was fourth trimester with my oldest then twins. You know, I found out I was pregnant with twins. I felt like I was the only person on earth that was going to be having twins when I already had a very young child.

Alli Merriman: [00:05:01] In addition, I just didn't happen to know anyone else with that experience. My twins were also born early and again they came home and I was experiencing just tons of anxiety, really similar to with my oldest, but with multiples. It

was times two. I was just having a tough time. I felt like I wasn't giving my oldest enough attention. I felt like I wasn't bonding enough with my twins. I felt like I didn't have a connection with them. And since there were two of them plus another child, I kind of felt like I was just doing an assembly line, like change, diaper change, diaper, give bottle, give bottle, put down, put down. It just felt not like it felt with my first.

Esther Gallagher: [00:05:41] Alli. I just had an image of the mother pig in that wonderful animation.

Alli Merriman: [00:05:47] Sing, Sing, sing. Oh, yes.

Alli Merriman: [00:05:49] Oh, I can absolutely relate. It's one of my daughter's favorite movies.

Esther Gallagher: [00:05:53] Yes. Yes. No.

Alli Merriman: [00:05:55] So that is so true. It really was. It felt like an assembly line. And I felt like I wasn't connecting. And since I had already had my oldest, I could see the difference. And and that was really hard for me. And then, you know, I wasn't feeling right, wasn't feeling right, kind of wondering, is this postpartum anxiety or not going back and forth with my husband. I actually went to my six week checkup with my OB. They didn't ask me any questions about anything.

Alli Merriman: [00:06:21] This is only two and a half years ago. My OB didn't ask me anything about postpartum anxiety, depression. Nothing left that appointment. And it took my pediatrician actually to notice that that I wasn't seeming right because she had been working with me for a few years. The pediatrician mentioned she's like, you know, you seem really anxious. I had been taking my twins to the doctor, like way too much. I'd been taking them to the doctor, like once or twice a week, freaking out that something was wrong with my preemies. And she suggested that I get some extra support for that.

Esther Gallagher: [00:06:53] I mean, it's impressive that she would broach the subject with you in the first place. And you're not the first mom in my experience, who's said,

Yeah, the OB shrugged, you know, did a cervical exam and sent me home. But it was the pediatrician who was able to flag that maybe the babies were great. It was me who needed some attention.

Alli Merriman: [00:07:20] Yeah, and it's actually pretty amazing because once she pointed that out, I tried to make an appointment with my OB and explained why. I said, It seems like I might have postpartum depression or anxiety. And they told me they didn't have an appointment. It was like four weeks from then and I was desperate. I mean, they didn't know. Luckily, I have a strong support system of family, a wonderful husband, but how did they know?

Alli Merriman: [00:07:43] And so they kind of pushed me aside even when I told them my concern. Luckily, I have an awesome general doctor, so my general doctor, who happens to be a father of twins, his third child was twins. So four kids, he was fantastic and helped me too. So yeah, you can't depend, I guess, always on on the doctor that you think will be the most help. And I still to this day thank my pediatrician for pointing it out to me because once I realized that and got help, everything was just like went everything clicked into place. I mean, I ended up making being a twin mom kind of into a career.

Esther Gallagher: [00:08:23] Well, in more ways than one. Yes. I think well, I certainly can resonate with. Having the struggles of early parent and all of parenting, but particularly early parenting, be the thing that launched me on my trajectory right in life. So, yeah, well, you survived and thrived. We're always grateful for that. And I just think, yes, it's such an interesting phenomenon that it that the people who we've come to sort of conflate all things perinatal with, which is obstetricians really have kind of a. A somewhat narrow focus. Right. It's getting through us through our pregnancy and and making sure that baby comes out okay. And that's about it. Right.

Alli Merriman: [00:09:23] And a lot of moms we know don't necessarily think about that fourth trimester period. They're thinking about the pregnancy, the pregnancy, the pregnancy. And they a lot of times don't plan for that time right after. I do have to say something funny is that my sister is actually an ob gyn in across the country from me, so

she luckily has seen my experience and was horrified. And so she's got that kind of forefront of her mind. Yeah.

Esther Gallagher: [00:09:50] Yeah. Well, I do think that there has been enough that's come to light and been reported that's reflecting back at Ops that they're, you know, they're starting to institutionalize some sort of structures to try to have somewhat of a net that catches mothers. But I think it's got a long way to go.

Alli Merriman: [00:10:11] Right. Definitely. I agree.

Sarah Trott: [00:10:13] I was curious if you're comfortable sharing what kind of help you ended up getting through your OB.

Alli Merriman: [00:10:17] Well, this is interesting because here's a whole other thing, which is that getting through insurance, finding a therapist that is like specializes in whatever issue you're having, it's nearly impossible. I think we've probably all heard the news stories about this, but I'm one of those people that try to a huge long list of people and, you know, my, you know, insurance company would give me a list of like 20 people to call and like, you know, three people returned my call and none of them had any open appointments for any time I could go.

Alli Merriman: [00:10:50] Plus, I was a mom of three kids under two years old. So I'm not just going to be like leisurely sitting in the office with all of my my little babies with me. So I did end up taking Zoloft, which was the perfect solution for my situation. And I mean, it is too bad that I wasn't able to talk to a therapist, but sadly, that just didn't turn out to even be an option for me.

Esther Gallagher: [00:11:16] You know, and the thing is that while you luckily were well suited to Zoloft and vice versa, you know, mental health drugs can be a very challenging thing, right? Like different experiences. Everyone's going to have different experiences and not all of those are going to be I don't want to scare anyone away from mental health drugs. I think, you know, they're a godsend. And. It can take time and careful observation to to establish the appropriate. Medications when it comes to mental health.

So yeah, it's wonderful and lucky. Yeah, that's a lot worked for you. And by the way. You're not the first person to tell me about Zoloft. Oh, that's funny. Yeah.

Alli Merriman: [00:12:14] Well, you know, when I was having the anxiety, another big support system for me was I'm on a Facebook Moms of multiples group. I'm in an in-person group, too. But I recommend for all expecting parents, but especially parents of multiples to join both in-person and Facebook groups. Because sometimes there are things you don't necessarily want to bring up with people you see all the time or people that might know you outside of this circumstance. So the Facebook group was really great just for anonymity and to just put things out there without, you know, being afraid that like, everyone around me was going to find out.

Esther Gallagher: [00:12:53] Good tip. Yeah.

Sarah Trott: [00:12:56] So tell us a bit about twins and multiples.

Alli Merriman: [00:13:00] Yes. Well, obviously, the I mean, I think people automatically think, whoa, it must be so hard having two babies at once. Just the obvious things. And that's true. And of course, the other obvious part is that it's so rewarding to see to see your twins interact with each other and have that bond and just to be able to have the experience of parenting twins, two babies that were born on the exact same day. So that's kind of the obvious stuff. The not so obvious part is that I love is that I kind of got to join a almost like a sorority of moms.

Alli Merriman: [00:13:39] It's just this little like exclusive club of moms, unofficial being a mom of twins. So anywhere I go, if I'm in Trader Joe's, I might run into, you know, a 70 year old mom of twins whose kids have grown up. Or I might run into another mom who has two infants, but the twin moms all reach out to each other. They you know, it's like immediately if you find out someone else is a twin mom or vice versa, you have to chat and you have, you know, things in common.

Alli Merriman: [00:14:07] Twin moms like I've noticed too, will just reach out and help, even if they don't know you. I went on a recent cross-country trip for my sister's wedding

and my husband, with all the chaos of packing, all the kids forgot to bring any shoes at all for my son. So we flew all the way across the country with no shoes.

Alli Merriman: [00:14:25] Got to got to our destination. And another twin mom in in Connecticut who I hadn't seen or spoken to in at least 15 or 20 years, insisted on driving over to the place where we were staying with a pair of shoes for my son, just hand-me-downs, but just it's that kind of thing that happens all the time. I had just moved to the suburbs from the city and I was working full time with my oldest, so I hadn't really met that many people in the suburbs.

Alli Merriman: [00:14:55] But I was able to meet tons of people through my local moms of multiple group. So that's kind of the benefit for me. And then, you know, life with twins, it is similar to having two kids close in age, but the one difference is that fourth trimester, because that's the only with twins, are you going to have two newborns at the exact same time. And that was certainly very, very challenging. Just having to have sometimes two babies would be crying at once.

Alli Merriman: [00:15:24] And it's hard to console both of them, you know, dealing with both babies, eating needs, sleep needs, those type of things. Times two is definitely kind of crazy and overwhelming. But then the pride you have when you finally get things under control and realize that you're capable of taking care of two babies or two babies plus one more, it's like it's almost like it just feels like a really big accomplishment. So that part is nice.

Esther Gallagher: [00:15:53] Yeah. Alli I am sort of circling back around on that. Like, I don't, you know, I think the average person would find it hard to appreciate. You know, just just the variability in twins parenting experience. I do not have twins. I've been the doula for parents of twins many times. Postpartum doula. And I have to say that one of the things that fascinated me most from my vantage point was that no.

Esther Gallagher: [00:16:33] You know, if I sat down all the parents of twins that I've ever worked with in in my living room and said, you know what I remember about you guys? What I'd be saying is every one of you had two different babies And. Each of you

are different, had different babies from each other. And so. You know, even even the parents who had two kids who, for instance, might have been willing to eat at the same time. Right. Right. Let alone sleep at the same time and change, get their diapers changed at the same time like they were an outlier. You know, most babies aren't even if they're identical twins, they are not doing the same things at the same time all the time. So when you say as the mother of twins, like. You know, the chaos of it. It's. Yeah, it's exponential, right?

Alli Merriman: [00:17:36] Yeah, I was able to and I didn't. Unfortunately, having a doula is something I would recommend to any person expecting twins. If you can afford it, I would absolutely recommend it. I think that is like invaluable also because the way.

Esther Gallagher: [00:17:49] Find a way To afford it

Alli Merriman: [00:17:49] right? Because also also not only because you think, oh, doula extra help, but it's not just the extra help. The doula is able to give you tons of advice and I think you need someone there to say like, you've got this, you're doing fine. You know, just that kind of advice or like helping, oh my gosh, the babies are doing this. Is this normal? Just having someone right there to help you in that way, I think is like just priceless. Unfortunately, I.

Esther Gallagher: [00:18:15] We call it Support.

Alli Merriman: [00:18:16] Yes. Unfortunately, I wasn't able to afford that. So I was, you know, talking a lot with other moms in my twin moms group. And I had a high school. This was a great thing for people that might not have as much money. I had a high school girl come over to be a mother's helper for the twins so that I could play with my older daughter just in another room and this 15 year old girl.

Alli Merriman: [00:18:39] It was funny because she, you know, had no experience with babies. So she was just a fresh, clean slate, a wonderful, sweet girl and was like the baby whisperer. She was so calm all the time and just so patient with them. And, you know, nothing seemed strange to her because she had never worked with babies in the

first place. And I was right there in the house. Her mom's right around the corner. And so that was really good for us.

Alli Merriman: [00:19:00] But yeah, I kind of did have to try to keep my twins on the same schedule as much as possible. But the funny thing too, is, like you're saying of them being different, their personalities flip flop so much too, just in that first year. So whoever is the really, really fussy baby those first couple of weeks, all of a sudden it's flip flops and the other baby is the fussy baby, or whoever you know is the good sleeper in the beginning flip flop and then the other person's the good sleeper. So just like with one baby, it feels like everything's a phase. And everything's always changing. With two, they're changing and they're flip flopping. So it's. They're always keeping you on your toes.

Esther Gallagher: [00:19:37] Yeah. Gosh, yeah. I worked with parents. There is a disaster in the family. Dad had to fly away just as those twins were newborn. Oh, wow. They had family care during the night and. Twins were the one exception I made in my career for two working nights instead of exclusively days. But this was a set of fraternal twin boys, and one of them just refused to breastfeed.

Esther Gallagher: [00:20:20] Uh, so my my job every night was to get up with mom when the one baby was hungry, when bottle feed the fella who wasn't going to take the breast while the one who would did and make sure mom had stuff to eat and that was it. Like, that's what we did every night until her husband was able to come home and rejoin the family. But you never quite know in advance what are going to be the specific things, right? Uh, you know, just handling two babies at the same time. You know, my daughter, you were talking about the 15 year old who just didn't know any better, so she just did it, you know, And.

Alli Merriman: [00:21:04] She did everything exactly how I wanted because she had no other experience.

Esther Gallagher: [00:21:08] Yeah, my daughter had an interesting experience. She worked for a lesbian couple who who had twins and. It was very early on and she told

me about. Sitting. Taylor, Sit. You know, like in yoga. Right. Right on the floor with one baby in one leg and one baby in the other. Crossing her arms, you know, crossing her hands with a bottle in each hand and being able to feed those babies. And she just she just came up with this on her own. And the moms were like, Wait. Yeah. How did you figure that out? I love it. So she she just was experimental and was able to show them like, you know, it's okay to try stuff. Right, Right, right. Try new things. Yeah. Yeah.

Alli Merriman: [00:21:57] And it's I mean, I do the other thing with twins that at least it depends on your personality as a parent. You know what things are going to work best for you. But I'm someone that definitely needed to have like somewhat amount of sleep to be able to function and to be a good parent. And I also needed to have some like some breaks. So my husband and I actually, instead of doing things at the same time, like what you're describing with the twin mom and the nighttime, we did shifts a lot of the time where one of us was in charge of the babies and one of us was in charge of our older daughter.

Alli Merriman: [00:22:32] And these shifts were really great because we each got at least like 4 or 5 solid hours of sleep a night even, you know, of course I was going to bed at like 630, but I got those five hours of sleep and then we each got time with our older daughter. And then the other reason the shifts were great for us is because my husband really got to see what it's like taking care of the twins on his own. Because I do have some friends where the mom kind of just did everything all the time and the dad never even got to really have the experience of taking care of newborn twins without someone helping him every step of the way.

Esther Gallagher: [00:23:07] Yeah, you know, Alli, I'll just mention for our listeners that one of our early interviews was with the stay at home father of twins. Oh, I love that. Yeah. I mean, and you know, he talks a lot about what, a train wreck it felt like for the first several weeks, but that, you know, you call in your people and they help you the best they can and and you get through it.

Alli Merriman: [00:23:36] Yeah, I'm going to have to listen to that one. I'm going to. That sounds great.

Esther Gallagher: [00:23:39] Andrew Gentry is the name of the dad. Yeah.

Sarah Trott: [00:23:45] So, Alli, I would love to hear from you and Esther from both of you, really about what you think are the main differences. If you were to make a list of the three things or the five things that parents who are expecting twins or multiples could do to help prepare for the fourth trimester?

Esther Gallagher: [00:24:01] I would just start with the fact that, you know, pregnancies this harkens back to your story. Pregnancies don't always last nine months, right. Alli, your story of imagining that you were just going to work right up to 40 weeks and then go to the hospital, have baby come home. You know, this is not the reality, even when it is. It's not the reality. So, you know, I think we need to start shifting culture a little bit towards don't put all your eggs in the in the birth basket. Right. If if you've made it to 12 weeks pregnancy and you're pretty guaranteed that this baby is going to make it to 30 or so, right now's the time to start preparing for what happens when that baby does arrive, whenever they arrive.

Alli Merriman: [00:24:53] Right, right, right.

Esther Gallagher: [00:24:55] You're going to need support, however, and whenever your baby arrives. And I'm not even going to say, especially if you have twins, especially if you have a preemie, especially anything, if you're going to have a baby, start preparing for the eventuality that is postpartum.

Alli Merriman: [00:25:21] Yes, definitely agree with that. And then a twin. A twin specific or multiple specific thing. Well, it's kind of specific is just making sure you're in some kind of a group with other parents of multiples because there will just be differences in that fourth trimester that moms of single babies just won't have had experience with. So I think it's really important to have that kind of a support system as well as the obvious support system that Esther mentioned about just having family friends lined up.

Alli Merriman: [00:25:56] And then I think the big difference, in my opinion, with planning for multiples versus a single is, I think with multiples, it is important to keep them on as much of a schedule as you can because it keeps the parents more like sane and focused and better rested so that they can be a better parent because having two babies at once is draining and with a single baby, schedules obviously are often frowned upon. You're not really supposed to do that, but with multiples, it really can help the family and help the parents sanity so that they can get through this really tricky couple of weeks.

Esther Gallagher: [00:26:36] I think my response to that is I know that this is the advice that everyone gets, and I don't see it as a problem per se. But I do think that there is a real challenge in establishing those schedules. So finding the kind of support around you that is non rigid, non-judgmental, supportive of the whole family getting what they need, Right. So that so that it's not at the baby's expense. It's not at the mom's expense, it's not at the partner's expense or the three year old or the nine year old. Right.

Esther Gallagher: [00:27:20] You know, like there is I think that that here's where I like to be a little idealistic, which is who can we attract from family, friends and professionals? Who's going to see us as a whole family with individual needs that don't have to be in conflict? You know, however. So however we sort that out, whether, you know, and that that can include some amount of scheduling, of course.

Alli Merriman: [00:27:49] And speaking from that too, about the whole family, that kind of reminds me of another thing, especially for parents of multiples to remember, is that the right way to do things is the way that works for you and your family and your partner. There are a million right ways to do things and the right way to do something. If it's two parents who are home with one baby is different than the right way.

Alli Merriman: [00:28:12] If you have one parent traveling all the time for work and you have twins and an older kid. It's every person's situation is different depending on so many factors. So the right way for your family and for your baby is the way that keeps everyone in the family's needs met as best as you can. Because, you know, if people's

needs aren't being met, then they're not going to be that support system that they, you know, that the babies need and that the family needs.

Esther Gallagher: [00:28:40] Exactly right. I mean, I think that's the lesson, podcast after podcast, show after show that gets reflected back from people from every angle, right? Like, you know, and as I often say, like. If you can't if mom's needs aren't being met for for nourishment and sleep right, then everything is going to start to get pretty shaky. Right.

Alli Merriman: [00:29:11] So and one other piece of advice that I think is important for parents of multiples and for any parents that I think really helped my husband and me is just communicate and talk as much as you can ahead of time about like, how would we handle this specific problem if it came up? How might we handle this? You know, talking about things ahead of time, one thing that helped my husband and me is we, besides making time for frequent alone time and date nights and those types of things which we have done, and I think that's helped us a ton.

Alli Merriman: [00:29:41] But another little tiny piece of advice is we were wondering how are we going to handle it if we're disagreeing about some child rearing practice or some decision of what to do with the baby. How are we going to what if we both disagree and we made an agreement, Then whatever the pediatrician says will do and it doesn't have to be that you could say you could say whatever our doula says will do or whatever some other person says or you know, something, but some kind of way to resolve those disagreements. It certainly doesn't have to be the pediatrician. It could be anyone who you know and trust, but some little, you know, outside person that can help you quickly solve those disagreements.

Esther Gallagher: [00:30:20] Yeah. That there's that you've designated a referee. Exactly.

Alli Merriman: [00:30:24] Exactly.

Esther Gallagher: [00:30:24] And they you know because of their the trust you put in them and their wisdom, you're willing to to relinquish the argument to have a solution. Right. Rather than getting stuck in an argument. That's lovely. I think that's some of the best advice I've ever heard.

Alli Merriman: [00:30:42] Well, thanks. And well, the other and the other funny thing is, I will add, if any listeners out here are pregnant with twins and already have 1 or 2 children or however many, I wasn't sure what it would be like. But the transition from zero children to one child was much, much, much harder on our marriage than the transition from one child to three children. It was almost seamless in terms of our marriage. It was almost seamless, one child to three children. But I would not say that about zero children to one child.

Esther Gallagher: [00:31:13] Yeah, yeah. Put some trust in the fact that you made it through the first kid. Yeah, totally. If if you in fact did make it through the first gate, which, you know, is an accomplishment in itself. Yeah. Uh, which is not to denigrate or judge anyone who didn't. I am in that category. I have been a single mom most of my momhood. So. And that can work out too.

Alli Merriman: [00:31:40] Absolutely can. Absolutely. And I've had I've definitely even worked with I've worked with some single mothers by choice who are pregnant with twins and they're doing fantastic. It's definitely so again, too. If you're a single parent expecting twins right now, it's easily possible you're going to do just fine. You've got this.

Esther Gallagher: [00:32:00] Yeah, that's great. Alli, you when did you learn of our podcast and what can you tell us about being a podcast listener?

Alli Merriman: [00:32:11] So I well, I heard about the podcast at the birth and Baby Fair, of course. Yeah. And then I started listening the next morning actually, because as I mentioned, I struggled a lot during my fourth trimester, so this seemed really relevant to me. And probably the things that have stood out the most from the podcast is the emphasis on self-care for the mom, which I think is crucial and often overlooked.

Alli Merriman: [00:32:38] And I also for me, since I wasn't able to I mean, I think being a parent is almost like teaching where when you're teaching, you're teaching in a classroom with your door closed and you don't necessarily see what everyone else is doing in their classrooms. So I went through my fourth trimester in my own way. And now by listening to your podcast, I hear more about other people's experiences and it opens my mind so that I'll have more of a wealth of knowledge when I'm working with parents. So just like the last episode that I heard, for example, where it was the experience of what exactly does a doula do all day, That was a great one for me to listen to because I want to be able to help parents that I work with to know what to expect. And I didn't go through it myself. So now I know a little bit better how to help people.

Esther Gallagher: [00:33:28] Great. Excellent. Yeah.

Sarah Trott: [00:33:31] So I am curious to know what are the most common themes or questions that come up when you're working with parents of twins or multiples in their families?

Alli Merriman: [00:33:40] I mean, a lot of people get concerned about the items and what do they have to buy two of and what's the best item for this that this? And of course, I think that most parents, people who already have kids know that the items are not that important. It's the people. So they that's one thing I do have to say is that don't go crazy over buying two of everything and twin specific items and you know the stuff. You should really focus more on the people and that kind of support system. So we do get questions about that.

Alli Merriman: [00:34:14] And then I think a lot of it is people really just want reassurance that they're going to survive this. They're going to survive having newborn twins and they're going to, you know, still be able to live life, still be able to have time to themselves, you know, still be able to have fun. And I think people kind of want that reassurance. And I know that I really wanted that reassurance from someone who had been through it.

Alli Merriman: [00:34:40] And then last is just getting through life with daily life with newborn twins, including ideas for helping them sleep, ideas for how to feed, how to breastfeed twins, ways to bottle feed, twins, balancing, you know, pumping, breastfeeding, whatever of those types of things. So those are basically the main areas that parents ask about.

Esther Gallagher: [00:35:02] Yeah, yeah. I imagine, um, you give periodically give referrals to absolutely other professionals like lactation consultants who have a lot of experience with twins. And we have.

Alli Merriman: [00:35:18] Some we I actually even know twins specific and they exist obviously all over the place. But twin specific lactation consultants who are mothers of twins themselves and went through that breastfeeding journey. And I think that is so helpful to twin breastfeeding twin moms because it I mean, clearly and obviously it's very different experience.

Esther Gallagher: [00:35:40] Yeah. Yes, it is just we want to put in a little quick plug because episode 49 is about all the stuff, you know, And we interviewed Ali Al-idrisi about his little start up called UpChoose Cocoon. It's on our our website, episode 49, where he talks about, you know, the proliferation of stuff and that, you know, there are solutions for not being so stuff oriented. Right.

Esther Gallagher: [00:36:19] And you know, he has a little subscription business that just sends you the right amount of the little shirts and little pants that you need to keep a baby clothed. And it was a fun episode. But yeah, I think it's true. Parents get really focused on product and forget that. Really. Exactly. As you said, Alli, it's it's the folks around you who are going to make this. You know. An enduring, edifying experience. And it's also I hate to be the one to say it, the people that you judiciously choose not to have around you because you. Absolutely.

Alli Merriman: [00:37:05] Absolutely.

Esther Gallagher: [00:37:06] They're not going to add value. They're just going to make life more chaotic and draining.

Alli Merriman: [00:37:12] Yeah, I totally agree with that, especially those first few weeks home. I mentioned that actually in one of my blog posts, just about surviving the first few weeks home. Be strategic about who visits you and for how long.

Esther Gallagher: [00:37:25] Yeah.

Sarah Trott: [00:37:26] Alli, Would you like to share with our listeners ways that they can find out more about you and get in touch with you?

Alli Merriman: [00:37:32] Yes. So I work Twin love Concierge has a great website. All the content is free and it includes product reviews for twin specific products as well as blogs covering a variety of topics. Some of the blogs are written by our twin lactation consultant, some of them are written by our twin specific sleep training consultant, as well as just how to find an au pair, how to find help for things getting through those first weeks home.

Alli Merriman: [00:38:03] So definitely check out our Twin Love concierge website. If you there's a section on the website too to learn more information about each of the each of the people that work for the company. And you can find my bio there as well as my email address. And my email is Alli at Twin Love Concierge.com. So definitely some of the things on the website are applicable to people with with single babies as well as multiples, but definitely recommend the website for anyone who has twins or triplets or more.

Esther Gallagher: [00:38:45] Wonderful.

Sarah Trott: [00:38:46] That's great. And we understand that you have some courses and classes that parents of twins and multiples would be interested in taking.

Alli Merriman: [00:38:53] Yes. So we have different locations in major cities around the country and also location in London where we teach on site, expecting twin classes. Some of the locations teach breastfeeding, twin classes. Some of the locations teach first year with twins classes. So we have those in different cities throughout the country that you can find information about those classes on the website. And then we also offer lots of different online classes that you can take from anywhere, including the first year with twins, the expecting twins, breastfeeding twins, sleep in twins class. So yeah, all of those classes are available really to anyone seeing as you can do them online or in person. Wonderful.

Sarah Trott: [00:39:38] And for our listeners, if you're interested in taking those classes, Twin Love Concierge has extended an opportunity for us to give you a code which is fourth trimester to use when you're checking out, and I think you'll be getting some kind of discount or special offer as part of that for using the code. So you can find out more details about that on our website, fourth trimester PODCAST.COM or on our Facebook page. Alli, you've been such a wonderful guest for us today. Thank you so much.

Alli Merriman: [00:40:04] Thank you for having me. This is fun.

Esther Gallagher: [00:40:06] Oh, it was great, Alli. I'm so pleased to have had the opportunity to chat with you and hear about your your journey and your work.

Alli Merriman: [00:40:14] Thank you.

Sarah Trott: [00:40:15] Thank you so much. And if you haven't signed up for the newsletter yet, please go to fourth trimester podcast.com and sign up for our newsletter and check out more of our content there. Thank you so much.

Sarah Trott: You can find out more about Esther Gallagher on <http://www.esthergallagher.com/>. You can also subscribe to this podcast in order to hear more from us. [Click here for iTunes](#) and [click here for Google Podcasts](#). Thank you for listening everyone and I hope you'll join us next time on the Fourth Trimester. The theme music on this podcast was created by Sean Trott. Hear more at <https://soundcloud.com/seantrott>. Special thanks to my true loves: my husband Ben,

daughter Penelope, and baby girl Evelyn. Don't forget to share the Fourth Trimester Podcast with any new and expecting parents. I'm Sarah Trott. Goodbye for now.