

Fourth Trimester Podcast

Episode 6: Allyson Downey

[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 benefitted 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 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 welcome back to the fourth trimester. This is Sarah Trott and I am joined today by Allyson Downey who is the CEO and co-founder of <https://weespring.com/> which is a startup that helps new and expecting parents to collect advice from their friends about what they need for their families. And some people call it a Yelp for baby products. She's also the author of a new book called Here's The Plan which is a career guide for pregnancy and parenthood. And that's getting published imminently. Allyson you can tell me the exact date on that one.

ALLYSON DOWNEY: [00:01:14] It's April 26th. It's hitting now because it came into the warehouse a little bit early. So I've been getting pictures from my friends for the last few days of like their unwrapping up the book. Which is really sweet.

SARAH TROTT: [00:01:26] Fantastic. So Allyson has an MBA from Columbia. She lives in Boulder with her husband Jack and she has two children. Allyson I just wanted to thank you so so much for agreeing to be on the program. My pleasure. Thank you. I wanted to ask you a question that we ask a lot of our guests which was to talk a little bit about what your fourth trimester was like.

ALLYSON DOWNEY: [00:01:47] So I have two kids now and they were radically different experiences in those early months after both of them were born. So with my son I had some complications during delivery. Nothing scary or dangerous but it resulted in a lot of swelling for me for a long time and I was physically wrecked by it I couldn't sit down and I couldn't really I kind of shuffled around my house. I was swollen up like a balloon. I had to go back to the hospital a couple of times and I was completely unprepared for that and I was unprepared to have to deal with all the emotional stuff while also being pretty physically limited. And it was rough is really really rough. I cried all the time in part because I felt like my body was betraying me and I was so uncomfortable and in pain. But I was awash with hormones and I remember there were a few times where I would just look at my tiny baby and burst into tears and they were tears about the fact that he was never going to be that tiny again. And I felt like with every minute it was slipping away from me and it just left me completely panicked and upset. And it took me a long time to realize it that was hormones and that I would not feel like that for the rest of his life looking at him like the minutes are going so fast. But then with my daughter who is about three years younger than my son it was like that like iconic like idealistic idyllic maternity leave except I couldn't really take maternity leave

because I was running a startup. So while I felt great and you know we have these pictures of us out to dinner with my newborn and my son when she was 4 day old I remember standing in line at a hotdog place in Manhattan on the Hudson River and someone walked up to me and said Oh how old is your baby. And they their face when I said she's four days just kind of said it all that you know there's this expectation that you are a little bit housebound for a while and that you need to take this time and shelter your baby. But for us that time around I just I felt so great I wanted to get out. I wanted to do things. But I also had looming over me the whole time the fact that I had this startup that was still really for the most part in its infancy and there's no question that I could step away from it for three months but I had to be back you know in a matter of weeks. And it made it really really hard to feel like it wasn't the moment slipping away in the same way it felt like with my son. But I felt like my time with her was so limited.

SARAH TROTT: [00:04:26] It just goes to show that everyone's fourth trimester is different and that's different from baby to baby.

ALLYSON DOWNEY: [00:04:32] I remember after Logan was born and my sister in law told me about how she went on a hike when her baby was like a week old and the baby didn't come but she went out on a hike. And with Logan I was I just could not wrap my head around being outside and walking strenuously because I could barely walk from one end of the apartment to the other and I was in a tiny New York City apartment. And then I understood it when I had my daughter. And I didn't have the same level of severe swelling and it just felt OK and breastfeeding also went easier the second time. I think in part because my daughter is different than my son. And you know all babies are different. But I also was a little bit more practiced at it so it wasn't that kind of scary overwhelming painful thing. And with your first baby you think is this pain going to be like this forever. And it's hard to fathom it not being miserable and bloody when it when it finally does get better. It's so much better. And I at least knew with my daughter that there was a clearer light at the end of the tunnel.

SARAH TROTT: [00:05:38] Yeah absolutely. And what did your support structure look like.

ALLYSON DOWNEY: [00:05:42] When my son was born I didn't really have one. I mean my mom and my mother in law were both really helpful and wanted to be. But I

was in New York and my family lives in Rhode Island and Florida. And my mother in law was there and present. It's kind of just different from your own mom. So I was alone for a lot of the time. My husband started business school when my son was about a week old and the early days and weeks of business school are so demanding and you have to be there all the time you have to be going to corporate events and it's so important for you to make the connections with other people in your class. So I was pretty isolated. And it wasn't until my son was about four weeks old that I realized that I needed help. And at that point I put out feelers and I went ended up connecting with this woman that another friend of mine did tae-kwon-do with and she came and met me at a coffee shop and I thought at that point I was interviewing her really for you know one or two hours a week while I found what our long term child care was going to be. Just to give me a little bit of a breather and when I sat down with her she she asked if she could hold my baby and when she picked him up she just had this beaming smile across her face. And I thought to myself I need this woman to be around so I can feel like that when I hold my baby, rather than feeling completely exhausted when I hold my baby. So she started working a couple afternoons a week just for a few hours each time and I was also looking for a job at the time. So that pretty quickly ramped up to her being very present and around so I could go out and do interviews and you know send e-mails out and do all the things I needed to do. And she wound up staying with us until we left New York. It was one of the hardest conversations I had to have you know three and a half years later when we decided that we were going to leave New York was you know telling this woman who was part of her family that we weren't going to see our everyday anymore.

SARAH TROTT: [00:07:48] So she was playing the role of primary caregiver alongside you and your husband.

[00:07:51] Yeah. And it was like that as well with my second child. So she was there you know from the day Caroline was born and she in fact brought my son Logan to the hospital to see Caroline for the first time. She was with us 50 hours a week. It's funny her birthday was it was June 3rd and I went into labor you know like two hours after she left for the night and we were thinking for a little while that Caroline and Lily would have the same birthday. But Caroline was born early the next morning. And you know eight hours later Liliana and Logan were there are meeting her.

SARAH TROTT: [00:08:26] Is there a kind of support that you would recommend for women who are going into their first pregnancy.

ALLYSON DOWNEY: [00:08:32] I think there are a lot of shoulds in motherhood like I should be able to do this on my own. The yardstick that I used to hold myself up against which I know is ludicrous was pioneer women that I had this vision in my head of a pioneer woman in a covered wagon going across the American West thinking to myself well pioneer women to have lactation consultants and pioneer women didn't have nannies. And finally one day I told my friend about this and she looked at me and deadpanned well pioneer babies died. And it's totally true. It's not you know it's not that we're weaker now or we need more help or even just you as an individual are not as capable as other people around you. You know we were built to have villages and lots of support. So don't feel like you are incapable or an adequate if you need that support. Everybody has it. Everybody gets it. And if you can afford to have paid support that's wonderful. And having someone come in and you know spend a little bit of time with your baby during your maternity leave so you can have time to to be you a little bit and sleep and rest and do all of the things that you used to be able to do before you had a new baby. Family can be wonderful. But if neither of those things are available to you then find mom friends find other parents who live nearby who have babies the same age and spend your days together. Go for three hour walks together pushing strollers. So you have someone to talk to and understand and empathize with how hard things are. I remember when my son was really young I found this breastfeeding support group in my neighborhood and all the babies were you know within a week or two of each others age and there is one woman from it that I used to go out for these long walks with and we were wheeling our babies along and complaining about how hard everything is and how exhausting it is. And there was a family that walked into Central Park in front of us that had three car seats in one triple stroller. Clearly newborn triplets and the two of us looked at each other and said I think we have to stop complaining because you know there's always someone who's going through something a little bit harder than you and you just remember that you know everyone for the most part ultimately survives. It makes it a little bit less overwhelming and intimidating.

SARAH TROTT: [00:10:59] It's true because we have the pressure of the newborn baby at home a lot of emotions flying around a lot of new feelings and experiences. It's hard. We're sleep deprived and that doesn't necessarily need to be compounded by a sense

of guilt that it should be easier or should as you say you should be this or that there's no need for additional level of pressure that we put on ourselves. Well that's a really good point. So I want to ask you what inspired you to create a new start up that is about helping new parents.

ALLYSON DOWNEY: [00:11:32] Yes so the genesis of it really was in those long walks around Central Park alone with my newborn baby thinking that I had so many questions and they were questions that my friends had the answers to. But I wasn't totally sure who would have the answer to which question. And I wanted a way to be able to tap into that collective wisdom and knowledge. The message boards never really were that appealing to me. I felt like I didn't necessarily trust the advice of the people on the other end of them. And I knew that my friends you know I trusted them and they were figuring it out and I knew which friends I wanted to emulate. So at the same time though I didn't want to turn my Facebook feed into a wall of me asking questions like What do you do when you have a baby with a cold. And you know what do you do for a baby who's waking up all the time in the middle of night with gas. And as I thought about it more and more I realize that a lot of the questions that I had actually had product answers that you know when you have a baby that has a cold you need a Nose Freeda and you should use a good saline spray and you definitely wanna have a humidifier in the room and Boogie Wipes are great 'cause you can get the dried snot off your kid's face. And when your baby is really gassy you can try gripe water and you can try having your baby sleep in the swing and started to see that there was an opportunity to tap into people's product knowledge in a way that would help them solve some of those parent problems like a baby's not sleeping: well you know try a velcro swaddle, the happiest baby on the block and a pacifier that has a clip or a pacifier that has a little animal on the end. And we started kind of mapping it out on you know basically napkins and it went on for a while that we talked about this idea for months and months and my husband and I cofounded it together actually. And he was doing his MBA at NYU at the time and his opportunity cost to do this was pretty low. He had his summer internship kind of looming ahead of him he was not terribly interested in any of the corporate internship opportunities that were out there. So he decided to take the summer and see if he could get this thing off the ground and you know find a web developer and incorporate and wireframe it and it just started to build momentum from there. So I was still you know going to my day job every day and working on it at night and on the weekends. And he was working on it full time during the summer and then around his

coursework when he got back and we finally reached a point where we needed to go all in. If it was ever going to really turn into something so I left my job, it was terrifying but also a huge relief because the thing I wanted to spend my days doing was the thing I was spending my nights doing. And I you know quit and walked away. And we very fortunately got into TechStars a few weeks after all of that and were able to get funding so I say things fell into place. I hate it when women say I was lucky because luck is not something that just comes down upon you. Luck is something you make. But we were able to pull all of those things together at once and turn it into a business.

SARAH TROTT: [00:14:50] And so you experienced firsthand creating a new business while juggling parenthood at the same time.

ALLYSON DOWNEY: [00:14:55] Yes it is not for the faint of heart. But I think that a lot of women think you know I need a less demanding job after I have a baby. I need some time to get used to this whole parent thing and I had this terrible experience of pregnancy discrimination when I was pregnant with Logan. So when I went back to work and was looking for a new job after that I wanted an easy job. I wanted a job that was going to compensate me well and would make me feel good about the work that I was doing every day. I went to work at a nonprofit but that I could also do blindfolded with my hands tied behind my back. And what I quickly realized is that an easy job is not actually what you need, you need a job that is an exciting job and sometimes easy jobs are exciting jobs but you know it's not the worst thing in the world to have a demanding job as a new mother. As long as you enjoy the work that you're doing that if you don't love the work that you're doing it makes it 100 times harder to leave your tiny baby in the morning and spend an entire day away from from him or her and then come back when you're exhausted and spend a couple of hours with your baby, if that before your baby goes to bed. But if your days are full of things that are stimulating and challenging and fun and exciting it just makes everything so much easier.

SARAH TROTT: [00:16:13] Are there things women can do to make their jobs more exciting? It feels like a real conundrum.

ALLYSON DOWNEY: [00:16:18] Yeah I mean I think I think the big thing is that if you were in a job that is not making you happy that you're in it and you're afraid to leave because you're pregnant, of course there are financial considerations there and lots of

other obstacles I'm not going to pretend it's easy to go out and find a new job when you're pregnant. It's not. But know that the frustration and boredom and whatever it is that you're feeling with your job when you're pregnant is going to be exponentially greater afterward. So if you think you might want to make a change try to make the change and whether that's you know changing to a new role in your company or going and looking for something at a different company or different industry. It's not impossible to find a job when you are expecting a baby and in fact I talked to a lot of women who were surprised by how quickly they were able to get lined up into new jobs even when they were walking around with you know eight month pregnant bellies. It's not always the case. People do make a lot of assumptions about pregnant women and a lot of employers who look at you might be thinking Is she really going to come back is she going to be as committed. So one of my favorite stories in the book was about a woman who was changing jobs when she was eight months pregnant and she went in for her first interview. It was it Glamour magazine. So she's walking into the elevator at Condé Nast which is totally intimidating and you're surrounded by all of these women who are in their stiletto heels and they're impossibly thin and are coiffed and look perfect and this woman walks in and she's wearing her flats and she's got her huge pregnant belly and is feeling really vulnerable and insecure and all she could think in her mind was oh my god the editors are going to notice that I'm wearing flats and she went in she nailed the interview. Pretty soon after she got the job offer and she got the job offer you know toward the end of her eighth month of pregnancy. And later when she actually started work after her maternity leave she said to her boss you know I really admired that you were willing to hire me when I was pregnant and her boss Cindy Levy the editor in chief of Glamour said Oh I do that all the time. I hire pregnant women all the time because the type of woman who is going to go out there when she's already feeling vulnerable and overwhelmed and go out and try and find a new job at that time because that is the woman who is ambitious and that's the type of woman I want on my team. Not all of the bosses managers out there are as forward thinking as Cindy Levy is. But it's a nice thing to remind yourself that looking for a job when you're pregnant actually demonstrates a lot of commitment.

SARAH TROTT: [00:18:57] I love that story. Are there other things you think new parents can do to prepare them that will actually aid their career.

ALLYSON DOWNEY: [00:19:03] Oh yeah. So I think it's never too early to start being prepared. You know the advice that I give women most often is to speak up for yourself and really voice what you want. People make a lot of assumptions about pregnant women, they make a lot of assumptions about women of childbearing age and I'm not just saying to you know lean in, though I do believe in leaning in but just really be clear about what you want because otherwise people are going to be thinking in their head that they're doing you a favor by giving you less responsibility or by not sending you on that business trip or not, you know having you go through the process of applying for a particular promotion because they think that they're making your life easier they think that they're helping you and they're good people they're you know I call it benevolent discrimination where you have someone who is trying to help and really winds up harming someone's career. So being really mindful of that and being direct about what you want and what you care about whether that's you know the ability to work from home two days a week or it's wanting to take on a project that's going to require you to work late nights. You can't presume that someone's going to be able to read your mind. In fact you should probably assume the opposite, that they have no idea what's going on in your head and it's your job to speak up to them. The other thing is being relentless about building your network. I think of a strong network as your super power that allows you to always land on your feet. You might not be able to fly. You might not be able to be invisible but you can land on your feet if you have a really strong network around you. And even if you don't need to land on your feet even if you are the kind of solidly on the ground and you are churning long in your career, having that powerful network is going to help bring more opportunities to you. And I don't think it's just about and actually I know it's not just about going out and showing up at all the networking events and handing out business cards and collecting other people's business cards and doing all of the really laborious stuff that's out there. You can build your own network from your smartphone, when you have five minutes of spare time by connecting other people who can help each other and if you get in a mindset where or whenever you meet a new person the first thing you think and it's now muscle memory for me just to think this way is who do I know who could help this person and connecting those two people is you know to favors for the price of one. You get two people who feel really good about you and really happy for you and maybe they feel a little bit like they owe you something. With one small e-mail introduction that you've made of people. So later, when you are trying to make connections in other places it's really easy to ask people to connect you with people that they already know. And that sounds like a good solid career advice

regardless. Totally. And it's something that you can start doing really early. And by the time you get to that ninth month of your pregnancy you have planted seeds for advocacy for you all over the place. It's not just about finding mentors. It's about seeding advocates because those are the people who you know a month, a year, five years down the line are going to be in a position to help you.

SARAH TROTT: [00:22:22] Is there anything specific that you would recommend for parents who are at home with their newborn. They've made it clear what they want at work. Now they're at home with their new baby is there anything that you'd recommend as part of the plan for that initial time period.

ALLYSON DOWNEY: [00:22:35] So I think getting out of the house is crucially important and meeting people and making connections. You know even from a professional standpoint there's this funny time right after your baby is born when you were a totally new parent that you are just more receptive to making connections to other people that you are eager to find mom friends. You want to know other people who have a baby the same age as you. And it goes the other way too. There are other people out there that you might not necessarily be able to strike up a friendship with in real life but you can get to know them and connect with them, if you are both on maternity leave at the same time. I interviewed a woman for my book who told me that she wound up inadvertently doing a lot of deals when she was on her maternity leave because she'd meet women and they'd start talking about what they did professionally and see all these opportunities to collaborate. And she just found that it was it was like one of those that period right when you get to college where you're at orientation and everyone is just so eager to meet everyone else and you make a ton of new friends in that short span of time. It's kind of the same when you were a really new parent.

SARAH TROTT: [00:23:47] What resources do you recommend for women to create those networks and connections?.

ALLYSON DOWNEY: [00:23:53] So you can finance a lot just by googling around for parent groups in your area. Anytime that there is an organized gathering show up and be there in person and maybe you don't make any meaningful connections with anybody but at least you got yourself out of your house for an hour. My breastfeeding support group was actually really powerful and again it was kind of a it was it was

almost like three birds with one stone. I was able to deal with my breastfeeding challenges. I got to feel a little less alone and meet other moms but also you know created friendships that did ultimately wind up helping me professionally in the long term. I mean meet up can be a great tool as well. Apparently the the most number of meet ups are mom meet ups when they look at the breakdown of the types of meet ups that are out there that moms are the most active users of it. So you can use meet up. there are usually list serves in a local community. And I know my friends in Brooklyn use the park slope parents listserve and I know is there is Berkeley parents network that's really active in California. So those are other opportunities to connect with people and really work to to turn it into the real life stuff. So an opportunity to just sit down with someone and coffee shop with both of your babies in strollers sleeping and have a real conversation.

SARAH TROTT: [00:25:10] Yeah and I would probably add that all of this comes along with the advice to wait and make sure that you're healed and that your body is ready to be going out and doing these things and don't feel bad if you don't feel quite ready. Give yourself the time. And then when you are ready create that support network.

ALLYSON DOWNEY: [00:25:24] 100 percent. You have to do it on your own schedule.

SARAH TROTT: [00:25:28] Yes. And with the support of Dr, postpartum doula, a midwife, there are people who are professional & can tell you whether or not you should truly be resting or when the right time is for you to be out there doing that. So what inspired you to create a guide for parenthood?

ALLYSON DOWNEY: [00:25:44] So I had this terrible experience when I was pregnant. And what surprised me most about it was that I felt like I was not the type of person who would ever be the subject of pregnancy discrimination, that I felt like I was too tough for it. I was too smart for it. And I was really blindsided by how little power and control I had when I was pregnant and couldn't get anyone in my office to return my phone calls anymore. And I felt vulnerable and I also felt really isolated, I felt like this was something that I was you know had happened to me when I was a victim of and that it was really rare. And I learned over the years in which I slowly built up my own confidence again that it's way more common than anyone talks about that 30 percent of the 2000 women I surveyed for my book said that they experienced some form of pregnancy

discrimination. And unless we're all talking about it and it's hard to feel comfortable enough to talk about it when a lot of women feel like it's kind of their fault that they were discriminated against. I mean I certainly felt that way even though I knew in my heart that it was not my fault. I felt like I could have, should have done something different that would have helped me avoid that. Unless you know that it's out there and unless you know that it's happening, there's no way to find a support network for yourself. So what I wanted to do is pull together the collective knowledge and wisdom of women who had made it through the minefield onto the other side and make it easy for someone to find it and to get all of that advice in one place. So you know I think of it is as you know I did the research so you don't have to.

SARAH TROTT: [00:27:31] And how can new mothers use their pregnancy and motherhood as a career advantage?

ALLYSON DOWNEY: [00:27:36] I wouldn't call it a career advantage but it's certainly not a career disadvantage or doesn't have to be a career disadvantage. There are things that do come out of pregnancy and new motherhood that can really really help you professionally and I would say one of those is the ability to really prioritize and be laser focused on what is most important in any given moment. I wound up sloughing off a lot of the busywork that I thought was important until I realized I had no time for it and then realized it was actually not important at all. There is the you know the adage that if you want to get something done you ask a busy person. Well there is no one busier than the working mother. And you know working mothers get a lot done in eight hours that would take a normal person 12 hours because they're getting distracted by Facebook or they're like wandering off to the break room for the birthday cake that's there and mothers really try and make the most of every minute and their day. Do you think women are even aware that they're being discriminated against? In that survey so 15 percent of women responded that they had been discriminated against. 15 percent said that they thought they might have been discriminated against and the gray area comes around you're not sure if you didn't get that promotion because you just had a baby or you're not sure if you are you know getting fewer cases thrown your way or getting tasked to fewer clients because you just had a baby. And it's hard to figure out in those instances whether you are being treated differently because you're a parent or whether you know it's just a coincidence or dumb luck. I think that the really important thing to do in both of those scenarios is to again,, speak up have the hard

conversations. Say you know I've noticed that my caseload is less or you know I notice that you know you're not sending as many clients my way as you used to. And I just want to make sure that that's not related to having a new baby. Because even though I am busy and you know want to spend a lot of time with my child I also really want to make sure that I'm doing all the things that I need to do here to continue to advance my career and grow and develop professionally.

SARAH TROTT: [00:29:49] Well it sounds like a difficult conversation to have with an employer, potentially.

ALLYSON DOWNEY: [00:29:52] It's a really difficult conversation to have because you don't want to accuse them of anything. And you know you can position it in a way that makes it clear that you know that they are in your corner and trying to do what's best for you and trying to help and support you. But you just want to be crystal clear that you want to continue growing your responsibility and that you are totally committed to your career and you want to be there five years from now. Because a lot of times what happens is if people start to think Oh she's not going to want to come back or oh she's going I want to come back but she's not going to want to have to be as you know stuck to the office or she's going to be able to leave and be with her kid or she's not going to have to worry about this when she's home. And it's all really well meaning it's not some chauvinist saying to you it's it's time for you to be home with your baby. But it still can really hold you back. So you know role play it. I highly highly encourage people to roleplay these conversations with someone else in advance whether it's your spouse or a friend or a professional coach. Professional coaches are thing that very few women turn to. I've talked to a lot of coaches about this recently. There is one woman who created a practice that was focused on helping women. And you know two thirds of her clients are men. And she thinks that women think sometimes feel like they don't need that or it's not something that's worth spending money on or they don't understand what they're spending money on. But what a coach can really do for you is help you get outside your own head in thinking about the professional landscape around you and really help you figure out what you want and figure out how to explain what you want and be the devil's advocate in those conversations to give you your employers perspective.

SARAH TROTT: [00:31:45] And what would be the ideal answer from an employer in a conversation like that?

ALLYSON DOWNEY: [00:31:49] So I think the good answer is I didn't realize I was doing that or. No of course I'm not doing that. Let's figure out how we can get you more responsibility and more opportunity. If you aren't comfortable saying I'm concerned that this is happening because I have a new baby, just say now that I'm back from my leave I want you to know that I want to do these three things and accomplish these three goals over the next six months. How can we make that happen and how can we get the assignments coming my way that're going to help me achieve those goals.

SARAH TROTT: [00:32:23] And I think it has a lot to balance with a new baby and new set of responsibilities at home with a growing family and then also to dive headfirst back into that career. So it does feel like a bit of juggling.

ALLYSON DOWNEY: [00:32:36] Oh it's totally juggling. And in the end it's not necessarily something you need to say the day you get back from maternity leave. You know maybe it's something you say when you've been back for six months and at that point feel a little bit more like you've recovered your equilibrium and you're ready to take on more responsibility. And I definitely don't want to give anyone the impression that they should just you know like put their head down and lean all the way in. That you do need time to adjust and you need time to recover but make sure you're communicating about what you want and if what you want is more responsibility, speak up. If you want to be able to work from home one day a week, speak up about that too. And you know when you're talking about reducing responsibilities talk in incremental periods of time. So say to your boss I'd like to be able to work from home two days a week for the first three months after I come back from maternity leave. Because if you just say I'd like to be able to work from home three days a week, your boss is now thinking this is something that's going to be going on in perpetuity and maybe after those three months you go back to your boss and say hey you know this is really working for me because I'm able to focus and get a lot more work done when I'm home where I am able to work extra time during the day because I don't have a commute anymore when I'm working from home. Can we do this for another three months and see where it goes? So you know when you put a finite time period around it you're much

less likely to get and have pigeonholed into someone who isn't as committed to her career as she used to be.

SARAH TROTT: [00:34:07] We talk a lot about leaning in here and there.

[00:34:09] I love Lean In. It was like an epiphany for me to read it. And what I tried to do in some places-- well first of all it's it's really honed in on the period around having a child. And you know my first draft proposal said you know like I've leaned in. Now what do i do? and I wanted to get kind of tactical about exactly what happens in that year leading up to having a baby and the year when you're back and you know onward for a couple of years after that, and really hone in on specific challenges and specific questions that people face. Something as mundane as what do you say in your out of office reply on your e-mail. You say you're on maternity leave? Do you say you are out on medical leave? Do not mention the baby at all? Do you say they can reach you? There are a lot of things there that feel a little bit, it just feels too open ended to women. I wanted to change those questions from open ended to be more multiple choice by giving people a Choose Your Own Adventure of what other women have done successfully.

SARAH TROTT: [00:35:17] If there was one thing from your book that a new parent could do what would you want that to be?

ALLYSON DOWNEY: [00:35:23] So I think what's most important is just remembering that you're not alone in this, that you're not you are not the only one going through this. And it's easy to feel that way. Because for the first three months your pregnancy you're not supposed to tell anybody. You don't you don't even have a friend to turn to and say like I'm throwing up in the bathroom every day. What can I do, so no one finds out that I'm pregnant before I want them to know I'm pregnant? or I've got to tell my boss and a couple weeks before this big trip how do I have that conversation with my boss? If you still don't tell your friends until a week before that. So really showing that there is a community out there that there are lots of women around you that have done that and that you're really not alone in it.

SARAH TROTT: [00:36:08] How can listeners connect with you?.

ALLYSON DOWNEY: [00:36:10] The website for the book is Here's The Plan book dot com. On Twitter I'm at Allyson Downey. And there's the contact form on the Web site. And I answer all those e-mails.

SARAH TROTT: [00:36:23] Thank you so much for being on the podcast today.

ALLYSON DOWNEY: [00:36:26] This is great Sarah. Thank you so much.

SARAH TROTT: [00:36:29] 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 Play](#). 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.