

Fourth Trimester Podcast

Episode 136: Prepare your Vagina for Birth with Britt Fohrman, Birth Educator & Doula

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: [00:00:00] My name is Sarah Trott and welcome back to the Fourth trimester podcast. I am here with my special guest today, Britt Fohrman, who I'll introduce in a moment. Today we're talking about preparing your vagina for birth, and we are going to get up close and personal with an amazing part of the body. And in this episode, we will be diving into some practical ways to prepare your body for birth, helping you open with more ease and confidence.

Sarah Trott: [00:00:26] So now I will introduce Britt. So Britt Fohrman as a doula and a yoga teacher, birth educator and pleasure coach for over two decades and close to over 500 births, Britt has been steeped in years of Buddhism, hypnosis, tantric, shamanistic explorations. She has devoted her life to helping people prepare for birth and parenting through yoga, relaxation, self-awareness, and a steadfast dedication to their intentions. She founded the Juicy Ladies Community in 2018 with the intention to bring more embodied joy, pleasure and connection into the lives of women of all ages and life stages through retreats, circles, pleasure immersions, and one on one coaching. Britt lives in San Francisco with her daughter Isadore, whose journey of coming into being has been her greatest teacher. Welcome, Britt. Welcome to the program.

Britt Fohrman: [00:01:18] Thanks, Sarah. I'm so happy to be here with you.

Sarah Trott: [00:01:20] Yes, congratulations on having your daughter.

Britt Fohrman: [00:01:24] Thank you.

Sarah Trott: [00:01:25] Because that was a recent experience for you. And congratulations on all the amazing work that you're doing. We're really excited to have you on the show to talk.

Britt Fohrman: [00:01:33] Thanks. I've been wanting to come on the show for a long time, so I'm so happy it worked out.

Sarah Trott: [00:01:38] Yeah, this is perfect. We were just talking about how the stars sort of aligned to make this a reality with our many mutual connections. We're super excited. Britt, I want to ask you a little bit about your own fourth trimester experience.

Britt Fohrman: [00:01:52] Yeah. So I really, like set myself up for success in the fourth trimester. I was planning on having a whole lot of postpartum doulas, and I'm a single mom, so when I gave birth, in a way that was very different than the way I had planned a home birth, I ended up with a cesarean birth. So it was really like the polar opposite of what I had intended. I actually needed to call in even more support than I had anticipated needing. And I was just reflecting on this because I was just listening to another podcast about you know, the Mexican, traditional Mexican practices of quarantine in the, in the fourth trimester.

And I was thinking, oh, wow, I really did that. So I set up a meal train for myself, and I had meals delivered from people in my community for about three months. And luckily, my family supported my family, and my whole community really supported me in getting professional support with daytime postpartum doulas, nighttime doulas, friends and family filled in here and there. Even a lot of my clients showed up to hold my baby so that I could take naps and rest and recover, and it was really a beautiful and amazing time. Of course, it was a difficult time too, especially because I'm a widow. And so I had been anticipating, you know, wanting to, you know, my whole life wanting to share that with my husband.

Britt Fohrman: [00:03:17] And I was instead sharing that with my friends and my family. But there was, you know, some sorrow on top of the like, you know, transitional normal, like the emotional roller coaster of postpartum. So I'm really, really grateful for the depth of resources that I've spent my life cultivating in terms of meditative awareness, body awareness, capacity to really speak my feelings and move them through my body to understand what I need and to be able to ask for help.

And asking for help is actually one of the things that I really am a big proponent of support a lot of my clients and students in focusing on is just like, how do we let go of this like expectation that we're supposed to be so independent and really instead go

towards interdependence and allow other people to come into our intimate spaces and support us. And sometimes it's very vulnerable asking for that help. But I've gotten really good at it since my babies come, and I highly recommend that everybody take that on and just really like, you know, just getting in the habit of just asking for what you need and just trusting that other people will give you what they can and maybe even help you find what they can't give you themselves.

Sarah Trott: [00:04:33] That's such a lovely message to share with anyone else who's going through this experience. The point of asking for help. Yeah. And what are some ways that you asked for help or received help just to bring that to life and share some examples?

Britt Fohrman: [00:04:45] Yeah. So let's see. Well, one way was having a meal train. So pretty much anybody that had expressed that they were interested in being part of my support universe, which included my friends, my family, and then a lot of clients and students of mine from over the years. They all got put on an email list that one of my friends had access to, and she invited everybody to a spreadsheet where they could sign up for shifts that were purely about helping. And so that was one way. And then I also reached out to the doula community and asked for doulas who were in training because I didn't have the budget to just, like, have full time care. So I found some doulas that were in training or had just received their certification or were in the process of that. So I got some free postpartum care that way. And then, you know, sometimes it's just like, can you come over so that I can go to a yoga class? you know, sometimes it's just like, oh, can you like, the other day I was, I was hosting an event and I was going to go shopping, and then I was like, I don't really have time for this.

Britt Fohrman: [00:05:55] My baby needs me right now. And so I just, like, asked my friends to pick up a few things and bring them over so that I didn't have to go and get them myself. So I pretty much ask for help in every single realm. One other really, I think really important thing that people might appreciate is that when I did my registry, I did it through babylist. I'm not like a paid sponsor for this is not like a sponsorship post for babylist, but I really liked it because they give you the option to register for funds for postpartum support for meal delivery. And so in addition to people buying you the

material items, you can actually register for people to pretty much just PayPal you money for different things that you need, like childcare and postpartum support. And so my community was really able to chip in and for instance, like pay for a night doula or pay for daytime support or pay for the meal deliveries so that I didn't have to do all of that myself.

Sarah Trott: [00:06:53] Yeah, that's so cool. I mean, I think we've said it in other episodes too, but sometimes getting the service and support from helpers is so much more valuable than yet another onesie. That's very cute, but that baby's going to grow out of pretty quick.

Britt Fohrman: [00:07:08] Yeah. And actually I was pretty resourceful with gathering all the items that I needed for the baby. I tried to get everything for free, like, through Buy Nothing and through the single moms groups and all the other like, WhatsApp groups that I've been on. So I actually didn't really need a lot of stuff because I actually sourced most of it from within the community, which was awesome. And I still do that.

Sarah Trott: [00:07:34] Yeah, I love that recycle and reuse. We've had some cool people on the program talking about programs like UpChoose, so they have a baby clothing, very high quality pure cotton clothing company and you can basically just rent it. So because babies are growing so fast. You use it, send it back, get the next size sent to you so there's no time shopping or having to look for things or anticipate what you need. So there are some really neat solutions like that out there that you're not having to, like. Just buy more stuff. There's so much. Yeah. Cool. And since you mentioned your single motherhood status, I am curious. Are there things that have been specific to being a single parent that you would highlight as resources? It sounds like you found a neat single parent single mom group.

Britt Fohrman: [00:08:23] Yeah. So I know that a lot of people talk about how destructive and dangerous social media can be. But I have found that in my pregnancy and postpartum time that Facebook groups have been such an incredible resource, Facebook groups and WhatsApp groups. So there's a single Moms by Choice San

Francisco Facebook group that's incredibly active, and people are always giving and receiving support and resources through that group. So that's been incredibly helpful.

Britt Fohrman: [00:08:52] I'm exclusively pumping because my daughter is not that into my breasts because I have a low supply. So I'm also in an exclusively pumping Facebook group. And, you know, so so those groups have been really helpful.

Britt Fohrman: [00:09:05] And then in terms of like other single mom resources, again, I think it really comes down to just seeking out as much support as possible. So I got a couple of postpartum doulas who, after they were working for me for free, they were giving me a single moms rate. And that was really, really essential and helpful. And I think, you know, I think it's just, again, it's humbling to have to ask for things, and it's humbling to have to ask for discounts. And it's humbling to have to like, you know, kind of tell your story to all different, you know, new people. But it's also, I think, just necessary. It's like I am doing as well as I am doing because of all of the support that I have asked for and chosen to receive and all kinds of creative ways. But I definitely think networking with other single moms is like, is is is the way to go for sure.

Sarah Trott: [00:09:58] Yeah, having a shared experience. So there's a social aspect to that too.

Britt Fohrman: [00:10:01] Yeah, yeah.

Sarah Trott: [00:10:03] Yeah. That's lovely. Thank you. Thank you for sharing your story and being open. Yeah. So I want to hear more about this class that you teach. It's the topic of our conversation today, preparing your vagina for birth. What inspired you to create this class. And did you put a lot of it into practice for yourself?

Britt Fohrman: [00:10:21] Yes. Oh my God, I just got chills when you asked that question. It's my life. So I started attending births in 2000 as a doula and also simultaneously teaching birth preparation courses and teaching prenatal yoga, doing bodywork, teaching workshops for pregnant people, doing pregnancy photography and birth photography. So I pretty much used to spend all of my time hanging out with

pregnant people. And what I started to notice was that the one thing that people had the biggest questions about, they got the least amount of information about. And so maybe it's because I'm a very open person and I solicit open type of questions, vulnerable questions. I just shared that I am really good at getting vulnerable. And I think that people know that, therefore they can be vulnerable with me.

Britt Fohrman: [00:11:08] So people would often ask me questions like, what's going to happen to my vagina, to my genitals, to my vulva, to my pussy, whatever they call it. And how do I avoid having problems in the future? How do I avoid peeing all over myself for the rest of my life? How do I have good sex after I give birth? How do I not tear? How do I avoid having a traumatic birth or I had a traumatic birth the first time? How do I not have a traumatic birth the next time? Or I had a cesarean birth the first time? And how do I get my baby out of my pelvic floor the second time or third time? So I just started to hear all these questions, and I realized that none of the birth classes were really talking any more than like a couple minutes on perineal massage.

Britt Fohrman: [00:11:54] And for those that aren't familiar, perineal massage is literally just like if you were to think of this as like the bottom of the opening of your vagina. Perineum is the skin that's between the opening of your vagina and your anus. And that's often where they tell you, okay, just, you know, do this massage, do this pulling, this stretching. And that's, that's like all people get. And I found that that just wasn't enough. And I also because I've been doing personal and professional work around sexuality and embodiment and healing and releasing tension from I like to use the word yoni. So I'm just going to use that word from now on from our yoni. I realized that it was so much more than just that technique of perineal massage or kegels, and I felt like people actually had the whole Kegel thing completely wrong.

Britt Fohrman: [00:12:42] Most people were just focusing on tightening their pelvic floor, thinking they needed strength. But really what we need, vast majority of us actually need relaxation in our pelvic floors. We need release. But even to get to that point, what we need is presence. What we need is to actually be in that part of our bodies. So most people, when they get a lot. What I again have heard over, you know,

hundreds and hundreds of these conversations is that people are like, oh, now that I can't see that part of my body, I don't go there.

Britt Fohrman: [00:13:15] Like occasionally I would hear people say, oh yeah, I'm having the best sex of my life. But I heard so many people like feeling uncomfortable around their sexuality and pregnancy and not really connecting with that part of their bodies. And if they did, it was only in relationship with their partners. So it wasn't really about them going into that part of their body themselves. So I was like, okay, I have to create a course where we're talking about this. And immediately, as soon as I did and started teaching it at Natural Resources in San Francisco. It immediately became a success. It was selling out like all the time.

Britt Fohrman: [00:13:51] And so I decided to make an online course to make it more widely available. Because really, what I'm doing there is helping people get embodied in their genitals, to come into their pelvis, to have a sense of like, what is happened there, what might need to be cleared, how they want to show up in that part of their bodies, how they could feel more pleasure. Sometimes people have more pain in pregnancy, or the pain has come as a result of all different processes they've gone through. And so it's really just getting to be more familiar and then figuring out what needs to happen once you actually land in that place.

Sarah Trott: [00:14:26] It can be so mysterious, and there's so much fear around the actual birth to like, oh, how was a watermelon going to fit through something the size of a quarter, right?

Britt Fohrman: [00:14:49] Yeah. And actually I didn't answer the other part of your question, which was sort of how did it play into my experience of pregnancy and birth. And so, you know, I had witnessed close to 500 births before I gave birth. And I was so excited to give birth, I couldn't have been more prepared and more looking forward to the experience. I had this plan to have an ecstatic water birth in the room that I'm in right now in my home, and had an amazing birth team of midwives and doulas and friends and a photographer, and I really spent my whole pregnancy doing my course. I was actually creating the course, the online course, while I was pregnant.

Britt Fohrman: [00:15:31] So I was going through all of the exercises, all the meditations, all the movement practices as I was preparing for birth myself. And I've never been so embodied and connected to that part of my body, like ever. And I'm also, in addition to doing this work, I also am a sex love and relationship coach, and I focus on pleasure and how women and non-binary people can access more pleasure. And usually that is through working through the shame that we feel or the conditioning that we have or the negativity that we have. Either that's been, you know, kind of come at us or that's come from inside of us by our own patriarchal conditioning. So, some people would call me a pleasure expert.

Britt Fohrman: [00:16:17] I don't really particularly like to use that word, but I'm a very adamant pleasure explorer. And so I spent a lot of time feeling my body and feeling how my yoni was actually, like, wanting to open. And so I was doing all kinds of hands on work and yoga and breathing as I teach in the course. That was all about just breathing myself open, and you can even just do that right now, like you can, whether you're listening or whether you're Sarah or me. We can all do it together. Or you can just take a moment and just like, feel down into that part of your body. And first of all, just notice, like, does it feel open or does it feel like tightly closed.

Britt Fohrman: [00:17:00] And then you can just take a moment and even just close your eyes and take a really big breath down there and even just feel like, can I just allow even a little bit more opening in this part of my body? And then on the exhale, just feel how even just for a moment, you can create a release in this part of your body. And so this is, you know, one of the foundational practices that I teach. And of course, we go into greater detail, but it's like even just getting your breath there. And then what I start to do, start to teach, and when I was practicing in the pregnancy is then to listen.

Britt Fohrman: [00:17:35] So to, you know, we talk about like, you know, having gut instincts and like listening to your gut and listening to your heart, or listening to the wise, your wise voice and your mind, or your higher self. Well, a lot of people don't think about also listening to your yoni. And so I got really, really adept at listening to that part of my

body and figuring out like, what does she want? Like, how is she feeling? What kind of movement does she desire right now? What kind of pleasure would she like to have?

Britt Fohrman: [00:18:05] And you know, most people, you know, their experience of that part of their bodies is, is through sex with another person. And maybe there's a little bit of, you know, what people call masturbation that's, you know, just focused on, like, just having an orgasm and going to sleep or something like that. That's like kind of what I hear a lot of people talk about. But what I'm really an advocate for in the program, and what I explored a lot in pregnancy is what I call self-pleasure, which is really having a practice like it's like a meditation practice or a yoga practice where you are giving yourself pleasure not so much with the intention of having an orgasm, but with the intention of connecting in a loving, caring way with yourself.

Britt Fohrman: [00:18:45] And there's a lot of different directions that Self-pleasure can go. But one of the things that can be so helpful for birth is just to be getting to know that part of your body, literally touching it, feeling into it, breathing into it, doing movements that make it feel good, putting you know, oils and, you know, different concoctions on it. Getting toys that that part of your body likes and just befriending that part of you and really coming into it in a way where you're honoring like, this is the portal that my baby is going to pass through. What are the energies and the messages I want my baby to encounter as they're coming through me? Like, do I want them to feel me being like, is it gross? Did I, you know, did I get waxed? You know, close enough to my birth. Are people are people, you know, uncomfortable with the smell, with the blood, blah blah blah. Or am I feeling like this is the portal of all life and cosmic creation energy coming through me?

Britt Fohrman: [00:19:48] And so I did a lot of work around just feeling really relaxed and embodied and in heightened states of pleasure in that part of my body. And it really helped me meet the different anxieties and fears that everybody has leading up to birth. And one of the most important ways that it affected my birth process was that I went past 40 weeks and I'm 49 years old. I got pregnant through IVF. I was on medication to control my blood sugar. I have fibroids, so I had like four ways that the medical

establishment was telling me that I was high risk and that I should definitely be induced at 39 weeks.

Britt Fohrman: [00:20:32] But that didn't feel right to me. And I was planning a home birth, and my midwife agreed that as long as I stayed healthy and the baby seemed healthy, we could just keep going. And so anyway, long story short, I got past 40 weeks and nothing was happening. And I mean, there's a lot I was feeling the baby wasn't coming. And because I was so in my body, because I could really not just feel in my yoni, but I could just feel into my womb and I could feel into into the baby. I could just feel that I was healthy and my midwife was monitoring me, and eventually the hospital was monitoring me once we got to 41 weeks, but I was able to go to 42 weeks and a day before I checked into the hospital for an induction.

Britt Fohrman: [00:21:15] And that felt really empowering to me to be able to go that length of time, because I wanted to feel like I was doing everything I could to have the birth I wanted to have. The birth that I wanted to give my daughter, most importantly. And so it felt important to me to wait until labor started. And then when it didn't start and we were, you know, out of the window where in California you can legally have a home birth. I felt really comfortable and ready then to go to the hospital, and when I went to the hospital, I was doing my, you know, my dancing and my laughing and my moving around until things kind of went sideways.

Britt Fohrman: [00:21:51] And, you know, in the end, you know, my baby didn't get to come out of my yoni. But what I, what I feel so strongly about is that, first of all, everything was a success because I was so deeply embodied and that I knew that the way that she was born was the way she needed to be born. She was so tangled in her cord that she literally could not move like she never moved. The entire two days I was in labor, because she was so tangled up that she literally, like, had no leeway to, like, get through the pelvis. So it was, you know, it was stressful for both of us and unfortunate in that way. But even though I was, you know, totally wrecked after the birth and it took me a while to, like, get back on my feet, I'm really proud and happy to say that my libido came back very soon. Came back like three weeks later.

Britt Fohrman: [00:22:42] And even though I was healing from a very difficult birth and I was, you know, single mom and pumping all the time and everything, I could feel that erotic energy because I had had such a strong connection with it throughout the pregnancy. And this is like just one thing that I really feel strongly now about sharing with people who are preparing for birth and preparing for the fourth trimester is if you're interested in maintaining your sex life after you have your baby, whether it's with yourself or with your partner, or with multiple lovers or whatever your orientation is, that if you sustain that energy and build and work with that energy in the pregnancy, and of course it's going to evolve because it's important to remember that our sexuality is a living thing.

Britt Fohrman: [00:23:30] It's alive. It's changing all the time. So it's not just like I know my sexuality And it's just going to I'm going to go from, you know, preconception to pregnancy to birth to postpartum. And it's never going to change. Like that's totally unrealistic. We're always changing and our sexuality is always changing. But if you're connected to your erotic energy and you know how to access it and you have a positive relationship with your erotic energy, then it's more likely to return on its own.

Britt Fohrman: [00:24:00] It's more likely to find you because there's a pathway. There's like there's a conversation that's already been happening between your mind and your body. that makes it more available for you to actually get back into your life of pleasure after you give birth. And I do want to talk a little bit. You might have another question, so I'll pause, but I'll just say that I want to talk a little bit about, like coming back to sex, like after you have your baby.

Sarah Trott: [00:24:28] I mean, we can talk about that now.

Britt Fohrman: [00:24:30] So, you know, a lot of women tell me that they feel uncomfortable having sex after they gave birth, or they don't want it, or they don't have the energy for it, like they're not interested or they feel touched out, or they don't like what they used to like, or they had some kind of trauma to their pelvic floor or even, you know, a cesarean birth. And so, you know, one of the most important things, I mean, yes, you can get on your pelvic floor healing regimen, you can go to the pelvic floor PT

and make sure everything's all healed up, and you can do the exercises and get back into your body in a way that feels good to you. And, you know, a lot of that stuff is, is more common knowledge.

Britt Fohrman: [00:25:17] But one thing that I think people don't talk about, that I'd really like to speak to is that we invite someone else in before we even return to that place ourselves. That's usually what I notice people do is like, they'll have sex with their partner before they even touch their own yoni, before they even, like, give themselves an orgasm, before they even, you know, just like explore that area. And so what I really recommend is when you get to the point where you're, you know, where you want to resume your sex life or where you're starting to get curious, where you have even just the smallest amount of energy for it. I really recommend taking some time to explore your yoni yourself first, to feel like what kind of energy is here? What kind of emotions are here? What kind of pain is here? Like how might you like touch to be similar or different than how you like to be touched before so that you can educate your partner about how to touch you and make love to you and, you know, do other things to you that is from a place of real embodied knowing versus just like going at it.

Britt Fohrman: [00:26:30] And, you know, I know, I mean, I haven't met a single postpartum woman yet who's like, yeah, I just like, wanted to return to just, like, really intense pounding after I gave birth. Like, most people I talk to are like, I really want to take it slow. I want oral sex, I want cuddling, but that missing piece of, like, actually exploring self-pleasure first I think is, is is super, super important. And then that'll be like a guide for you to then help figure out what's next. And but one other thing I want to take a step back is that one of the things that I teach in the course that's really helpful is I teach the participants how to communicate with their partners about how they want to do the stretching.

Britt Fohrman: [00:27:15] So I call it instead of perineal massage, I call it pussy release because we're we're working on the whole opening and not just down below. I can get out my models instead of just working down here. I have people preparing like the entire opening in different ways, deeper inside and on the surface, and really exploring the whole area. so that it's not just fixated. I mean, yes, you're more likely to tear down here

than you are, like up here, but but we, we have, you know, experience all across the whole opening, like you said, when you're trying to get a watermelon out of a hole that's usually the size of a quarter, you you know, you you would imagine that the whole thing is going to open.

Britt Fohrman: [00:27:57] And so I focus on teaching people how to help their partners help them, you know, feel relaxed in that opening. And, and beautiful thing that occurs is that you get into a dialog about it and you start to talk about, like this touch, not that touch. I need you to slow down. I need you to look at me in the eye. I need you to breathe with me. I need you to just hold that point while I cry. Because I'm having a flashback to, you know, some trauma that happened when I was a teenager or something. And so people get more adept at actually talking about their yoginis.

Britt Fohrman: [00:28:31] And this is, you know, this is something that the feedback that I get about the class all the time is that people say that they never really thought about their yoni, like having a voice or having preferences. And so they actually get they get instructed on different ways to practice talking about this part of their body. And then when they can talk about it more, that means they can give their partners, their sexual partners, their intimate partners, more instruction and more guidance.

Britt Fohrman: [00:28:57] And that is not only really helpful in the pregnancy, but it can be extremely helpful during the birth because you can tell people where you want support, like do you want, you know, a warm washcloth on your bottom? Do you want to, you know, have a pleasure session in your labor? Do you, you know, just different, different ways that your team can support you. And also you can tell them, oh, I'm feeling pain here because I've, you know, you've been exploring it and you can speak to those parts more accurately, which is really beautiful and helpful for the provider.

Britt Fohrman: [00:29:29] But then after the birth, you can also instruct your partner, but you can also let your healthcare team know what's going on a lot better, because you've you've actually learned how to talk about your body in a way that most people don't.

Sarah Trott: [00:29:43] Going back to the point you made about your yoni having its own voice, I think that's a really interesting way to think about it. And so I'll ask a question in that vein, which is if you're yoni or your vagina or vulva could talk, what would it be telling us or asking us for as it relates to preparing for birth?

Britt Fohrman: [00:30:01] Well, everybody is going to say something different. So this is actually one of the questions that I ask at the beginning of the class is for people to, you know, do a meditation and tune in to how your yoni is feeling about giving birth. And oftentimes people will say anxious, afraid, unsure. Sometimes we hear excited, sometimes we hear curious. But it's a pretty broad spectrum, but most people that come to my class, they start off feeling disconnected. They start off feeling anxious. They start off feeling very afraid. And then through the journey, they become more empowered and more excited and more open to what's happening.

Britt Fohrman: [00:30:43] So, you know, I would really put that question back into the ears of the birthing people and just ask them to, you know, spend some time to tune in and listen. Like, what is your you might not know at first what your yoni actually needs, but you can start by asking your yoni how they're feeling, how they're feeling about birth. Like, what are they holding like? And as you start to open up the pathways of listening, then after the listening comes the guidance. And so part of what I do in the course is let people know a variety of options that they have about what they could want and what they could need, because some people don't even like, know that they have all these options.

Britt Fohrman: [00:31:26] And so we just start to talk about all these different ways that it could be and that it could feel and that it could look like. So that we can start to take some of that fear, the shame, the disconnection, and bring it into excitement and curiosity and empowerment and ideally, some experience of pleasure, whether that's, you know, leading up to the birth, during the birth or after the birth or all.

Sarah Trott: [00:31:52] It's almost like replacing the unknown with a vision of how it could be. And each person might have their own idea about what the ideal is for them, and then working on preparing a path to to make as much of that possible.

Britt Fohrman: [00:32:06] Yeah. And, you know, like so I'm a great example because I, you know, had this vision of what I wanted, like so like for my whole life, I knew what I wanted, I knew who I wanted there, you know, I had a midwife picked out for like, the past 20 years. And, you know, I got my birth tub at, like, you know, 37 weeks and and I was just, you know, so ready for this birth. But it helped me feel excited about birth. And, you know, every time I went to the hospital to get an ultrasound, which I did up until like the beginning of my third trimester, and then I stopped because every time I went there I was surrounded by so much fear.

Britt Fohrman: [00:32:47] And even being somebody who teaches people how to have confidence and to not be afraid of birth, I started to get afraid every time I went there, because they just started to talk to me about all the things that could go wrong, even though everything was perfect with my baby and with my body. And so I chose to surround myself with people who were reminding me of what was possible and not guaranteeing me. Nobody. None of the people on my team guaranteed me that I was going to have the birth that I wanted to have, but everybody at least encouraged me to believe that what I wanted was possible.

Britt Fohrman: [00:33:21] And so I went through the pregnancy. Looking forward to my birth and feeling very resourced and excited. If I went into my birth thinking, I mean, I knew I could have a caesarean. I've seen that happen so many times where people plan a home birth and have a caesarean. You never know what's going to happen. But I was excited. It was like I was preparing for, like, a hot date, you know, I was just like, you know, I had, like, my clothes and my playlist and my candles, and the room was all decorated and and I was, you know, I was looking forward to it.

Britt Fohrman: [00:33:54] And if I would have thought, oh, what if I have to get induced and go to the hospital and have a caesarean, then I wouldn't have been as excited. And so I was willing to do that if I needed to. And I did do it when I needed to do it. But most importantly, I felt excited about the birth that I wanted and that kept me going through the pregnancy. And I've seen that make a really big difference for people.

Sarah Trott: [00:34:17] you had a vision and you had enough foresight and experience to have a degree of flexibility built into your mindset. Yeah. And I'd had a question for you around the mind body relationship as being part of preparation. But I mean, I think you've just spoken to it so beautifully. Thank you. Is that your mindset is going to have a major impact on how you feel about your experience?

Britt Fohrman: [00:34:40] Yeah, indeed.

Sarah Trott: [00:34:41] Britt, another question I would love to ask you is really about the practicality around preparation. I want to hear from you. If there's someone listening, if they could just do one or a few things right now to help them prepare their vagina for birth. What kind of guidance could you give?

Britt Fohrman: [00:35:00] Well, I think I said some of the things, but I would love to just reiterate the importance of coming into relationship, into a conscious relationship with that part of your body. So that means breathing into it. So just even feeling your breath going into that part of you several times a day, sitting on the toilet is actually a great place to do that. Because you're, you know, hopefully taking a moment of, you know, time to yourself and not looking at your phone, but just, you know, your pelvic floor is open and relaxing. So breathing into your pelvic floor and feeling it is really important.

Britt Fohrman: [00:35:35] And then touching it and noticing like what comes up for you, is it like you touch it and you're like, oh, this is the place where I feel so good and I love touching this part of me. Or do you feel hesitant? Do you feel anxious? Do you feel uncomfortable? Do you feel shame when you touch it? And so that will then start to give you as you breathe into it and you touch it, you'll start to have a sense of where to orient yourself. Like if you have negativity when you go into that space, then you know, okay, I might need some coaching around this, or I might need some more education or I might need some more practice. So that's, you know, one thing.

Britt Fohrman: [00:36:12] And then in the course, I teach a lot of stuff that I've been teaching through prenatal yoga for decades now. So getting movement from a variety of different angles and perspectives, moving through that part of your body to help you feel

your own natural capacity to open that part of you. So, you know, a lot of people think of squats. So squats are one thing that you can do, but there's also all kinds of side lying positions and hands and knees positions and even standing positions that can help you to feel that part of you and begin to open it and relax it.

Britt Fohrman: [00:36:49] And I guess the last thing that I'll say is to stop tightening it so much. Now, I go into greater detail in the course about how to know when you're too tight and when you're too loose, because that's often a big question people have. And a lot of people go into the birth and the pregnancy and the postpartum kind of thinking that they just have to do a bunch of Kegels and get it as tight and strong as possible. But actually, what you need is for your pelvic floor to be responsive and to be able to hold, you know, hold the weight of your of your baby and your womb and all that water and your organs, like, throughout the the pregnancy and then to be able to, you know, respond and come online after you give birth, but you really need those muscles to let go in order to give birth vaginally.

Britt Fohrman: [00:37:36] And so one thing that people don't like often, that I tell them in the course is like, chill out on the CrossFit, chill out on the peloton, chill out on the bar method, chill out on the. Depending on who you're doing Pilates with and what the approach is. Sometimes even chilling out on Pilates or yoga, depending on how you're doing it. Because so many people just focus on like they take all of their motivated energy and they funnel it into tightening, tightening, tightening. And just remember that when you're tightening your core, like when you're tightening your abdominal muscles and you're tightening your glutes, oftentimes you are also tightening your pelvic floor.

Britt Fohrman: [00:38:15] So I just try to remind people to not like, you know, to go more towards like restorative and gentle yoga, more like chilled out prenatal yoga, walking and swimming and my favorite dancing like freeform dancing where you can just be a little bit more soft in your body. Just generally being more soft in your body will help your genitals relax and open when you're giving birth, instead of them staying really tight.

Sarah Trott: [00:38:45] So is there such a thing as like, too much birth preparation from that perspective?

Britt Fohrman: [00:38:50] Well, too much birth preparation is really like when someone gets really in their head about it and they think that they can kind of get all type A and like manage it with their will. That's what I would say. I don't recommend getting like hyper vigilant about birth preparation. One of the, you know, other things that I didn't mention that's really important is to learn how to regulate your nervous system and to be more in your parasympathetic nervous system, which is kind of like the, you know, people call it rest and digest or feed and breed mode versus fight or flight, which is sympathetic, which is, you know, fight, flight, freeze, fawn. We all know about that these days. But most people don't know how to relax. They don't know how to let go. And so what I would recommend is dedicate your birth preparation to learning how to let go. And it's going to help you in so many other ways. Like, for instance, right now at four and a half months postpartum, I am letting go of a lot physically, mentally, emotionally, spiritually.

Britt Fohrman: [00:39:58] Like sometimes my baby's crying and not going to sleep and I'm just like, okay, if I try to make this happen, I'm stressing myself out. But if I just let go and accept, like tonight may not be the best night of sleep. I'm so much better off than if I'm just like, trying to control, control, control it. And I noticed that in birth preparation too, is that people think, oh, I did all the right things and I took all the right classes and I did all the exercises, and therefore I should have this, you know, birth and and so instead of trying to be controlling, practicing, surrendering, not to submit to other people, not to just do what your doctor tells you to do all the time, but like, you know, to soften and surrender so that you can feel your intuitive wisdom and feel your body speaking and feel the guidance coming from your baby. And that's going to be much more accurate way of kind of sourcing information and making your way through your journey.

Sarah Trott: [00:40:54] Yeah. And back to your point earlier about being a little bit flexible. We have a birth plan template that we actually renamed as the Birth Intentions document for that reason because it's letting go of that control. You can't plan everything and expect it to go exactly as you want it.

Britt Fohrman: [00:41:13] Yeah, I love that. I love that you say birth intentions. And I saw that on your site. Yeah I, I call it birth preferences. Yeah. And yeah. Also share a template with with my audience as well. And um, and I think it's really important to have that vision of what you want as we've been talking and then to just be soft. It's like I took myself through my less than ideal birth mentally, like several times before I gave birth, just to know that, I would be okay, that I could be okay. However it goes. But that I really want this, you know, birth to go a certain way.

Britt Fohrman: [00:41:51] But that makes me want to speak to one one thing, which is, you know, how people might feel grief and disappointment after they give birth, because when you have these really clear intentions and preferences about how you want to give birth and then it doesn't work out that way, it can be really devastating. And I definitely felt that, like, so strongly and the most infuriating thing that anybody can say to a person that's had that experience is, well, you should just be happy because your baby's healthy. and that you're healthy. And I wanted to punch anybody in the face that would say that to me. And it got said even by some of the most well-meaning people in my life.

Britt Fohrman: [00:42:33] And so one thing that I think is really important that comes from all this embodiment work that I'm talking about, is to also give yourself space to grieve. If there is something that you're needing to grieve and grief is just interwoven with the experience of motherhood, I think, and parenting in general, because we have to let go of who we used to be as we become this whole new being, you know, we're literally transformed. We might have grief about the way our body looks.

Britt Fohrman: [00:43:02] We might have grief about our, you know, FOMO and not getting to do all the things our childless or friends with older children are doing. You know, like there's so many places that we could be feeling grief. But I really want to validate anybody that feels grief about their birth and just really encourage, like taking time to hold space for that grief, to seek out support for that grief. That's often one thing that I do in my coaching practice is really help people work through that grief and have it spoken and metabolized and, you know, honored because our culture, you know, it's

very, you know, binary. It's like either you had a great, you know, you had a healthy baby and therefore everything was perfect, or you didn't have a healthy baby and everything sucked. But you can't really, you know, say, oh, I had this hard birth and I'm grateful for my baby.

Britt Fohrman: [00:43:55] It's like there's often no room to talk about that. And for me, I actually wasn't really grateful for my baby. And I actually didn't feel connected to my baby. And I actually, you know, just felt sad every time I looked at my baby. And it took me weeks. I mean, I was I knew I was going to love her. I knew it was normal, what I was feeling, but I was so destroyed from the birth, like physically destroyed as well as, like emotionally, that it took me some time. It took me some time.

Britt Fohrman: [00:44:25] And thank goodness I had an amazing midwife who really held space for me and my community held space for me so that I could process that grief and that trauma. And then, you know, I'm happy to say that it's a lot better now. Four and a half months later. And and I think I might carry that grief for a while, but but I'm not carrying trauma and I'm not living in silence around it. You know, I can hold the both now. I can say, oh, I'm so glad you're here, and I'm so glad you're healthy, because now I love you. And now I am connected to you. And, you know, your birth happened in a way that was different than I wanted for us.

Sarah Trott: [00:45:04] We've had a wonderful somatic experiencing practitioner. Come on the program and talk about some of the work she does with people who give birth, who still felt like something needed to be completed. So people who had caesareans and they felt like because they didn't have a vaginal birth, they needed to still experience something like their body was still waiting to give birth in a funny sort of way. So she works with women to to sort of re-experience that in their bodies, which I think is a really neat aspect of the work.

Britt Fohrman: [00:45:36] I can't wait to listen to that episode, but I can say that intuitively. I kind of do that when I take a bath with my daughter, you know, like I, you know, pretend like we're having a water birth and I and it feels really good.

Sarah Trott: [00:45:51] Yeah, yeah, yeah, I can imagine.

Britt Fohrman: [00:45:54] Yeah.

Sarah Trott: [00:45:55] That's so sweet. I want to talk specifically about the vulva, the yoni. Is it ever going to be the same, and will it or can it be better in some ways after birth?

Britt Fohrman: [00:46:08] So it can absolutely be better. It can absolutely be transformed through the birth. Because you and I got chills just, you know, starting to talk about that. Because what can happen for us is that we can spend the pregnancy really coming into this intimate relationship with this part of us, and to really honor it instead of, you know, just remembering that Tammy Lynn Kent, who wrote the book *Wild Feminine*, who I just so love as a teacher around women's bodies and women's pelvises, she talks about how the remedy for shame is honor and blessing and and so, so much of what I teach is to really honor and bless this part of your body, and to just love it up and create this whole new dynamic and relationship with this part of you, so that as you go through the birth, you can love it and appreciate it so much more.

Britt Fohrman: [00:47:01] And I think it's easier to do that if you have if you end up having a vaginal birth and you can be like, oh my God, that part of me just, like, opened so big and now it's not open that big anymore. And wow, how did it do that? You know, like, just be in this state of awe and wonder about it. But even if you don't have that experience to be able to, like I said, you know, take the connection that you cultivate with it and take it all the way through into the postpartum time.

Britt Fohrman: [00:47:29] Now, if you're hearing this and you never got to do any of that in your pregnancy, and you're in the postpartum time, which is, as we talked about before, pretty much from the moment your child is born to the rest of your life, that you can start now, you can, you know, every day has the potential to be a new beginning with this part of you. And just to really honor it, to appreciate it, to listen to it, to explore it yourself, to really get to know it, to trust it, to trust that it has a voice. Sometimes, as I've learned the hard way in my life, sometimes it says things you don't want to hear. but just

to really listen to that part of your body and let it be your guide. And in my course, I talk about ways to continue the explorations. Ways that you can, you know, resources that you can access that can teach you more about this part of your body. I also have a postpartum yoga and meditation practice that I teach as part of the course, as sort of a way to honor the process and to make that transition into the next phase of your life. So yes, it may be different. And, it may and most likely will be different because you're different and things get moved around, things get stretched out, things get released, other places tense up in response to that.

Britt Fohrman: [00:48:49] But that's where, you know, doing rehab exercises is really important. I know you've brought people onto your podcast before that talk about, you know, postpartum rehab. But again, just listening in and really feeling that part of you and trusting that the change is part of your life because you're going to keep changing. It's like after you give birth, sort of the next phase of your life will be menopause, and there's going to be change there.

Britt Fohrman: [00:49:15] And I talked to and I work with a lot of people because I started doing my doula work you know, over 20 years ago. now, a lot of my, the women that I work with that have been in my community all this time are going through menopause. Right? And all my friends are going through menopause. I'm 49, so I'm probably going, you know, going through menopause any minute myself. So anyway, you know, that's another change. And some people see that as like, oh, now I'm all dried up and I'm not going to have any sexual pleasure anymore, but you can actually have even more pleasure in that time of your life. It's just a matter of really tuning in to how and by what means and, you know, letting go of this idea that it's all supposed to always be the same.

Sarah Trott: [00:49:59] Thank you.

Britt Fohrman: [00:50:00] You're welcome.

Sarah Trott: [00:50:00] And, Britt, what final thoughts do you want to share with our listeners today.

Britt Fohrman: [00:50:07] Just to appreciate the magic and resiliency of this part of your body and that you can really reach these, like Non-ordinary states, you can you know, you've probably hopefully in your sex life, you've reached Non-ordinary states at some point or another, you know, in the midst of even just a hot make-out session, but that that your yoni is a portal to learning, to growth, to transformation, to creativity, to pleasure, to aliveness, to this erotic energy that is your life force.

So the same energy that creates your baby and moves your baby through your body in birth is your sexual energy. And even if you don't feel your sexual energy present in your birth, that is just a reminder that there is this innate energy that you can access at different phases of the process to light yourself up, to give yourself energy, to help you relax, to help you feel empowered, to help you, to connect with yourself or with another. So I would just say, don't neglect your yoni. Explore your yoni and get to know her or them. And if you have no idea how to do that, you can reach out to me and I'd be glad to help you.

Sarah Trott: [00:51:24] And on that note, where can people find you if they want to meet you and learn more?

Britt Fohrman: [00:51:28] Yeah, so my website (<https://www.brittfohrman.com/>) is a great place to do that. You can also find it through theJuicyLadies.com. So the Juicy ladies is another aspect of my work where I'm really working with women within and around and beyond the childbearing time. you know, at any phase of life where you want to experience more pleasure, more joy, more embodiment and more connection and community. And so I lead retreats and do immersions and teach people how to have more pleasure and less suffering and more, more joy. And so I'm also the juicy ladies on Instagram, so that's a great place to find me as well.

Sarah Trott: [00:52:06] Okay. And you have a special offer prepared for your course. Do you want to share more about that?

Britt Fohrman: [00:52:11] Yeah. So if you use the code FOURTHTRIMESTER when you check out for the Preparing your Vagina for birth course, you get 10% off your course. So go ahead and sign up there. There's also access through my website and maybe we can link it in the show notes. There's a free series. that's kind of a teaser for connecting with your yoni and feeling more confident and more excited and more prepared for birth. So you can check out that free series on my website and start there if you're not quite ready to dive in yet.

Sarah Trott: [00:52:46] Okay, so we will put all the links and details in the show notes. Thank you so much for that generous offer. I encourage everyone who's out there preparing their bodies for birth to check out this course and learn more from Britt. Britt, thank you so much again for being on the program.

Britt Fohrman: [00:53:01] Thank you Sarah. It's great to be here.

Sarah Trott: You can subscribe to this podcast in order to hear more from us. [Click here for iTunes](#) and [click here for Spotify](#). 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.