

## **Episode 90: Emily was a surrogate**

We live in a pretty amazing time. Private citizens are going to outer space, cars are able to drive themselves to places without a human, all kinds of crazy things that our grandparents would never have imagined. I love hearing about the advances in science and technology.

And what we're talking about today might seem like it's always been around, but it's actually fairly new. We're talking about the idea of surrogacy. Being a surrogate mother means you carry someone else's baby for them. And the first surrogate pregnancy just happened in 1985. Scientists and doctors just figured this out recently, during my lifetime!

We're talking today with Emily. She lives in Canada, and she was a surrogate. I could tell when we first spoke that she was kind of an upbeat, positive person. I asked her, "What made you want to be a surrogate?"

### **Emily**

I had just decided I was done having my own children. That's typical of surrogates, usually they're done having their own families. I knew that I personally didn't want to have any of my own children and I was young and healthy and happy to work at a job that would allow me to do this kind of thing. So I just thought, "Why not? I can do it. I can give somebody else a baby. I can do that." (laughter)

### **Scott**

Okay, I have to admit, before doing this episode, I didn't really know much at all about surrogacy. So I had a few questions for Emily. I found out there are two types of surrogate.

### **Emily**

So I was a gestational surrogate. That means that the sperm and egg from the couple, or if it's a same sex couple they have an egg donor, they create an embryo in their clinic and then that embryo is transferred into my uterus. So a gestational surrogate has no biological connection to the baby at all. Traditional is a lot less common now because of complications that can happen with it. Traditional surrogates are biologically related to the baby. They are just using a sperm donor, or the sperm of the intended father, and using your own egg in your uterus. It is really not common anymore because that can create some legal problems and issues down the road for custody and things like that.

### **Scott**

As you might imagine, going into something like this requires a LOT of paperwork, and a lot of preparation.

### **Emily**

There's a lot of application processes and online surveys you have to fill out, and they want a small essay so I could describe why I wanted to do this. There's a lot of medical testing. I had to do a lot of bloodwork and tissue samples and tracking and timing. I had to work with a lawyer to develop a contract. I had to have a full psychological test as well, to make sure you're going into it for the right reason and that you have the right emotional stability to do this. It's a long process, it's not just an overnight thing, so you have to really commit to it for a while. As things

progress and you start getting closer to a transfer, there's a lot more testing, there's a lot more blood work and urine testing as well. I had to do a few internal tissue samples to figure out what day would be the very best possibility of a successful transfer.

**Scott**

That just sounds like a whole lot of work – not to mention having to be pregnant for 9 months. So with all of that, I wondered, what does Emily get for all of her effort? I mean, does a surrogate get paid for doing this? Well, it depends on where you live.

**Emily**

I'm in Canada. Here in Canada it's illegal to be paid, you cannot be compensated for being a surrogate. It has to be considered altruistic, there can be no compensation. In the United States, typically they are compensated, from the research I've found, between 50 and 80 thousand for a surrogacy.

So today, we're going to chat with Emily as she takes us on this journey of when she decided to be a surrogate mother for a young couple there in Canada. She had never done this before, but she had some basic expectations of how it was supposed to work. But what actually happened was not what she expected at all.

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**Scott**

The couple was Sarah and Brady and they had applied to the agency and you had applied to the same agency and that's how you got connected?

**Emily**

That's right yep. The agency is called Surrogacy in Canada Online. They had applied and were already part of it, and had been for a number of months. Similar to most couples or singles who are on there, they wait for a pretty long time. Then I had applied and they were one of the couples that reached out to me after my profile went live. We just emailed back and forth and told a little bit about ourselves and where we were at in our lives and what we were looking for. They explained to me why they were looking for a surrogate and I talked about why I wanted to be a surrogate. That lasted probably a month or month and a half of just chatting back and forth. Then we decided to meet. We went for coffee so they came to my hometown. I chose a couple that is in my province of Ontario, they weren't international. International surrogacy adds a different spin on things, so it was nice that they were able to come to me and be there for a lot of the important things. Anyway, they came to me and we met for coffee and chatted and it was great. We chatted for a couple hours and they were lovely and wonderful so right away I just wanted to give them all the babies. I just wanted to- if I could make a baby overnight I would've and given it to them. They were just wonderful, wonderful people.

**Scott**

That's got to make a big difference when you feel so comfortable and have an emotional bond with the couple.

**Emily**

Yeah for sure. I think it would have been a lot tougher, especially to go through the whole process, if you weren't close. I think it would be a lot tougher to be not so close.

**Scott**

So what was the routine? Once the pregnancy began, how often did you go for checkups, how often did you meet with them? What was your process there?

**Emily**

I'll start a bit before the pregnancy. So in order for me to get ready to be pregnant, we kind of had to trick my body into getting all the hormones ready. I had to take a number of different hormone medications, shots and pills everyday, just a lot of different medications in order to get my body ready to receive the transfer. I did that for probably 2 or 3 months, and then we did the transfer near the end of May. Luckily, the first one was successful, which in surrogacy isn't always common. Sometimes you have to try a few times before an embryo implants. Luckily with me it happened the first time and all the days they did the test and predicted when to do it, it worked. It took about 10-14 days to get a positive pregnancy test. Probably 6 or 7 days straight I was peeing on sticks and sending pictures to the parents saying, "I think I see a line! I think there's one there!" (laughter) After that there was a lot of going back and forth to the fertility clinic in their hometown, which is about an hour and a half away from me. I would go there probably once or twice a week minimum, so that they could do all the blood work, monitor everything, and do a lot of ultrasounds. They do many more ultrasounds than a typical pregnancy would have just because they want to make sure and keep an eye on everything. I stayed with the fertility clinic in their hometown, working with their doctors, for about 3 or 4 months, through the first trimester and a little bit beyond. After that, once the 12 weeks hits and the first trimester is over, I can stop taking all of the shots and medications because your body has accepted and you can continue on. By this point, your body is producing the proper amount of hormones to keep the baby growing strong. So I didn't have to take the medications anymore which was nice. I had been taking needles in my butt for about 5 or 6 months, so I was over it (laughter). There were a lot of needles.

**Scott**

Happy to be done with that huh?

**Emily**

I was happy to be done with that yeah. So that happens at the end of the first trimester, then I can stay in my hometown and get my own OB/GYN and I'm able to continue my appointments with them. It's still more appointments than typical. I was seeing them probably every two weeks for the majority of the pregnancy. I had quite a few ultrasounds as things were going on, just to monitor everything. After the first trimester it progresses more or less like a typical pregnancy, other than the amount of appointments you have to go to. There are no more needles or medications, your body is ready to go and is doing the right things; growing baby strong and giving all the nutrients. You just kind of hang out with the baby, sometimes watch Netflix (laughter) and you go to appointments.

Our due date was February 5th of 2020. I ended up delivering on February 6th of 2020 but I actually went into labor on the 5th, but I didn't end up delivering until the 6th. Still, it was pretty close. Up until that point, everything was great, everything was wonderful, all the tests came

back great. The baby was growing as he should be, he was checking off all the boxes, it was just a completely healthy pregnancy as it should be. All the appointments said, "Yep, everything's looking great." So on the 5th, I started feeling contractions and went into labor probably mid morning-ish. I kept an eye on the contractions, I was timing them, everything felt as normal as it was supposed to. I had already done it and it felt the same as when I was pregnant with my daughter. I called the hospital and told them, "I think it's time." I went in at 8:30 at night and the baby was born by 11:30 at night, just before midnight of February 6th.

**Scott**

Did Sarah and Brady meet you at the hospital, or when did they show up?

**Emily**

When we got there, we had to be assessed by a few different doctors. Once we knew for sure that yes it's time-- because we've all heard those stories before, sometimes you get there and the nurse says, "Well, you're only 1 centimeter dilated so maybe go home and relax, take a bath, do your things and then maybe come back." So I didn't want them to have to drive there if it wasn't time. We made sure it was time, then we called them. It was right at the due date so they had a bag ready to go, everything was ready. Then they got in the car, it was about an hour and a half drive, it probably took them about 2 hours to get there. Then when they arrived I was going into the OR for an emergency C-section. So they got there just as I was going in. Sarah was able to get her full set of scrubs on and she came into the OR with me and sat with me. She was right at my head right beside me. She was holding my hand and stroking my hair and just there for me the whole time.

**Scott**

What was that conversation like while she was there?

**Emily**

Ohhh (laughter). I remember her just constantly leaning over to me and telling me, "You're doing amazing. This is amazing, you're so amazing. Just keep on going." Just all kinds of really really supportive words and talking and she was just a really good calming presence for me. She made me feel like somebody was there with me the whole time. Even after her son was born, I remember having to look at her and say, "Go see your son! You don't need to stay here. Go see your son." So she said, "Are you sure?" I said, "Yeah yeah I'm sure. Go see your son."

**Scott**

Why did you need an emergency C-section?

**Emily**

When I came into the hospital and they hooked me up- for those who have been pregnant or had children they might know what I'm talking about- there's like a belt that goes around your big pregnant belly. Then there's kind of a little circular pad that sits on the top, and it's measuring what they call the variance between contractions. There's a strip that they print that's right beside the bed, it's a long- it almost looks like an ECG strip- it's a wave that's going up and down and up and down. So between contractions there should be a very large wave that shows baby's moving again and happy again. When uterus' contract the baby is all up in arms and isn't loving it, so once the uterus relaxes the baby should be able to relax as well and that should be

a very big variance. However, when they hooked me up, there wasn't a very big variance. It was just kind of the same the whole way, whether I was in contraction or not. So they hooked me up and then tried to find the heartbeat, which instantly I was terrified and thought, "Oh my goodness, something is wrong." But they found the heartbeat and he was beating strongly at 150 to 160 which is normal. That was a moment of absolute relief and I thought, "Ok good! Oh my goodness. Oh my goodness."

They had different doctors come in, there was the resident, the student, and all the different medical doctor levels came in and were checking me out and telling me what they thought. A lot of people were coming in and saying, "Hmm that's strange. I'm gonna go talk to this other person and see what they think." There was a lot of collaborating on what they thought was going on. That took probably about an hour or hour and a half until they realized, "What is this and why is it happening." So they moved me into a delivery room. At this point I was still in just a regular check-up type of room. They were giving me an epidural, which was fantastic because with my daughter I didn't have an epidural. I lived in a small town and they didn't have an anesthesiologist on call, so it was nice. They had given me an epidural and were getting me ready for things.

They told me I was about 5 centimeters dilated and then they said they wanted to break my water, which hadn't broken yet, so they did that manually and they said that they found meconium in it. Meconium is like baby poop in utero, which is very very dangerous, because a baby can inhale it and then it gets stuck in their airways. However, that did not happen, they just noticed there was baby poop and that can sometimes tell us that the baby is in distress. So they noticed that and then with the problem with the variance they decided that they didn't want to wait for me to dilate fully to be able to have a vaginal birth, which is what I had with my daughter. They wanted to take me in for an emergency C-section. They felt that something was going on that was worrisome enough that they needed to bring us in and get the baby out.

**Scott**

Did they give you all this information or were you just kind of left to wonder, "Wow I wonder what's happening?"

**Emily**

They did. It helps that I work in healthcare, so I understood a lot of what they were saying even if they weren't talking to me. However, the staff did a pretty good job of trying to include me in what was going on and were very sensitive with trying to give me the information. So I wasn't just laying there, unable to move because of the epidural going, "What is happening?"

**Scott**

I would imagine they would-- it's kind of a balance they have to go with in keeping you fully informed versus telling you more than you need to know or having you go into a panic, which would not help anyone.

**Emily**

Yep, yep. I'm sure they've seen a wide variety of them. I'm sure they've given lots of info and the person was stone faced and I'm sure they've given little info and the person was absolutely freaking out, and all in the middle. It helps that I have healthcare knowledge already in my job,

so I could understand a lot of the things they were saying without requiring them to have to really come over and give me a full explanation, so that was helpful. It also helped that I had already had an epidural, because as soon as they decided to do an emergency C-section I would've had to wait longer to get an epidural if I didn't have it already. Luckily, they had already done that and I was more or less ready to go into the OR. We were trying to hold off and wait as long as we could to try to get either Sarah or Brady to be able to come in. I wanted it to be Sarah, but either one could've worked. We were trying and trying to wait but eventually said, "Nope, we've gotta go. We've gotta go." Luckily, they got there in time.

So they brought me into the OR and there was a big team of people. I remember laying there and they set up a big curtain, so you can't really see what's happening. Also you can't really feel your body, but at the same time I remember feeling like somebody was grabbing me hips or my waist and rocking me back and forth violently almost, I don't know why. They were cutting obviously and opening and getting the baby out, but it just really felt like someone was grabbing my hips and rocking me back and forth. I was laying there and Sarah was sitting beside me and holding me hand. Then they got the baby out and we heard him make a couple squeaking noises, and I remember looking over at the clock in the room and it was between 11:30 and midnight, and I turned to Sarah and I said, "February 6th." She said, "Yep, February 6th. February 6th is his birthday." We both kind of had a little smile and a couple tears, then I had to tell her to go see her son.

The NICU team was in the room, they were waiting for the delivery. There were 5 or 6 of them as well, and there were a lot of people in this room. The NICU team was there and waiting because of the meconium, or baby poop, in my water before it broke. Also because of the not big enough variance, they were there waiting, then when they took him out and they brought him over, the NICU was doing their thing. We could hear him making noises, so in my head I'm thinking, "Wow, I did this! I did it! There's a baby over there making noise." He wasn't crying but he was cooing and making some noises we could hear. The nurses came over to me and said, "We don't want him to cry, because of the meconium. They want to be able to suction out his airways before he were to take a big breath or cry." So in my head that made total sense why he wasn't crying, I was just like, "Yeah totally. Do your thing." They were saying, "We're gonna clean him up and take him over to the NICU for assessment." So they did, they cleaned him up and Sarah went over and saw him for a minute. Then Sarah came back to me for a minute and gave her a push and said, "Go be with your son." So she did and then they stitched me back up and I went back out to the recovery room there. I remember seeing Brady. Brady came over to me, and I couldn't move still because of the epidural; but came over to me and gave me a big hug and was crying saying, "Thank you so much. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you."

At this point nobody knew anything bad was happening at all. We all just kind of thought, "Oh yeah there was meconium and he needs to be assessed by NICU." Even in the delivery room, everybody gave us the sense that this was normal and he was fine and would just go over there for a day and then be fine.

### **Scott**

And that's comforting because they see it everyday.

### **Emily**

Right, exactly. We were at McMaster hospital, which is a children's hospital. If there's anywhere else in the province other than Sick Kids in Toronto, it was them.

**Scott**

Did Sarah and Brady know ahead of time that it was going to be a boy?

**Emily**

They did. We did a private gender reveal, so they came to my OB appointment after I had done an ultrasound. We asked them to put it in an envelope and seal it, and so they gave me the envelope. I don't know if you've ever seen the gender reveal where it's powder? So there's either a pink or blue powder, and you might throw it in a ball or a pinata or something like that.

**Scott**

Gender reveals are becoming more and more creative these days from what I can see.

**Emily**

Oh yeah there's some amazing ones I've seen online. It's a big deal. Anyway, they asked me to - they had one pouch of each powder, and while we were in the hospital I went into the big hospital bathroom in the lobby and opened the envelope. I found out it was going to be a boy, so I took the blue powder and put it in a little football they had. Brady really likes football, so they had a little football that I put the powder in and sealed it all back up and then I threw out the pink stuff and made sure there were no lingering powders anywhere. Then they took that home and had their own little private gender reveal, just the two of them. So they knew that it was going to be a boy.

**Scott**

That's awesome. Did they pick out a boy's name ahead of time?

**Emily**

Yeah, they did. They struggled a little bit. They had a few options but they ended up naming him Sam, after Brady's grandfather.

**Scott**

They're both at the hospital, you're recovering, and how is little Sam doing?

**Emily**

Sam was not doing well, unfortunately right from the beginning. I didn't find out any of this until the next morning, but that first night he was having multiple seizures, he couldn't hold up his own weight, he wasn't really making noises; he wasn't really doing the things that baby's should be doing. So they decided they wanted to try hypothermic therapy, which with brain damage sometimes can be helpful. If you can drop the temperature of the brain it can slow and sometimes reverse the damage that's been done to the tissue. They had done an MRI prior, and had found that Sam had HIE. Which stands for Hypoxic Ischemic Encephalopathy. Hypoxic means lack of oxygen, ischemic is lack of blood flow, and encephalopathy is in the brain. It's a rare thing that happens and most of the time it's quite mild, but it can lead to things like cerebral palsy in severe cases. So they had determined that at some point in the 24 hours of me delivering Sam, or the emergency C-section, something had happened and the blood flow to his

brain was severely diminished. He wasn't getting the proper amount of oxygen to his brain, so the tissues were actually dying in his brain in the last 24 hours while I was in labor.

The first night they determined this and put him in hypothermic therapy. There was a large neurological team involved in his care. He was put in hypothermic therapy and luckily his mom and dad were still able to touch him and kind of bond with him in that way. They do this therapy for 72 hours. Then they slowly start to warm the baby back up, and then they do another MRI to see where the brain is at, what the tissues are looking like, and if there's activity. While this is all going on, they're in the NICU, and I'm in the mother's delivery ward in my room being told what's going on. I remember the next day, I was visited by a social worker named Carla, who was fantastic and lovely. She had been involved in our case before Sam was even born because it's common for the hospital to have a social worker involved in a surrogacy situation; just so there's somebody involved for the hospital and everybody's sake. She came into my room and she was so kind. She was telling me about the struggles through the night and what was going on with Sam and what the plan was. I think after that, I remember laying in the hospital bed and I was sobbing for hours. That night I couldn't sleep. I remember laying in the hospital bed and just staring at-- you know those hospital clocks that make so much noise and tick so loud. I remember laying there and watching the clock, watching the seconds go by, because that's all my brain could do. I couldn't think or function or anything, I just had to watch the seconds tick because then I was doing something. I couldn't think about what was happening; I just couldn't do it.

**Scott**

There was so much time, this hypothermic treatment is 3, 24 hour, periods of everyone just waiting.

**Emily**

Yeah the worst 3 day wait ever. You just hope and pray and hope and pray that it's going to give us some results and that something good will come out of this. It was a long 3 days. Brady and Sarah were staying at the Ronald McDonald house, which was right across the street. I'm not sure, do you guys have that in the states?

**Scott**

Yes.

**Emily**

Ok, so we had one right across the street from that hospital, because it's the children's hospital, and they were staying there. That company and that organization was just fantastic, they were amazing. I was never over there but I heard a whole lot of the things that Brady and Sarah were saying. They had all the good things to say about them which was wonderful, especially since they were out of town. So to have a place they could stay at right across the street so they could be there with their son was really amazing. They were able to stay there while it was all going on and I was being monitored and was kept in the hospital a couple days longer than typical, I think just because of what was going on. Sam was born late at night on a Thursday, so then on Saturday and Sunday, the social worker wasn't there, the specialists aren't there to deal with that kind of thing. So they had me stay until Monday to talk to the social worker again and have a plan going forward of what was going on. I was released from the hospital Monday and went

home still unsure of where this was going to end up, how this was going to go, what was going to be the result of the cooling therapy. I was still in touch with Sarah and Brady. They came to see me a few times while I was in the hospital. They'd come over and talk to me and give me updates and tell me what was going on. Once I left the hospital they were texting and calling and just keeping me up to date as best they could.

Monday was when they took Sam off the cooling therapy, it was finished. Then they started to warm him back up again. So Tuesday he was back to normal body temperature and they did another MRI. Then Sarah and Brady met with the entire neuro team and the NICU team. I was told there were about 10 doctors in there as well as a social worker and OB and all the people that were involved in his care. Every single one of them recommended termination. Not one of them thought that he would be able to survive. They thought that his injuries were just too severe and his quality of life would not be very good. So mom and dad had a pretty hard decision to make, deciding what they were going to do, and what that was going to look like if they were going to try to raise Sam or not given his extensive brain damage. That was Tuesday. From that point on I didn't talk to Sarah or Brady for a few days. It was mostly the social worker that I was in contact with for a few days. She was the one that actually told me that Brady and Sarah had decided to take Sam off of his supports and let him pass away. So they did that. They took him off, and they got 36 hours. They tell me sometimes that they got 36 hours of the best baby hugs and snuggles they've ever had. They got to hug and snuggle and be with Sam for 36 hours. After that he passed away a week after he was born, it was 7 days later.

### **Scott**

It was the social worker that brought you that news?

### **Emily**

Yeah, and I understand. They were just so consumed in their own grief and what was happening with them at the hospital. I totally get it and understand. Carla was the go between for a couple days for them and me. It was just easier for them to have her do that as opposed to-- they're trying to spend the last few hours with their son, but then the responsibility of having to deal with me, it wasn't-- it was good that the social worker was involved. I had people that were there with me and able to give me support. My parents had come from out of town and were helping me with my daughter and they stayed, after I got out of the hospital, for 4 or 5 days to help me. I had also just had major abdominal surgery so I couldn't move around too much and I couldn't walk too much, so they stayed and were a very big help. Mostly they were able to keep my daughter occupied, take her out and play games with her, those kinds of things. I also had my boyfriend there with me. He had been through this with me the whole time. He spent every moment at the hospital with me, he experienced the loss with me, he was there the whole time. Then my daughter, she was really amazing too.

### **Scott**

No doubt your family felt bad for Sarah and Brady, obviously, as well. But you're their actual family, they would want to do what they can for you.

### **Emily**

Yeah, yeah. There was a lot of heartache and just feelings of grief and loss all around, for so many people. I felt terrible for Sarah and Brady because through the whole surrogacy journey

that I had with them, they didn't get their family or friends involved because of their past loss. Their family and friends had been involved in that pregnancy and loss and it was too devastating for the family, everybody was so sad. So when they decided to do their surrogacy journey, they didn't tell many people because just in case it didn't go as planned they didn't want to upset their whole family again. I remember the first couple days really being concerned that they were alone and didn't have anybody there with them. Luckily, Carla had told me that they called a couple family members and there were people there, so that made me happy and was comforting.

### **Scott**

I saw on your Instagram, one of the things that you wrote was, "I'm sorry I couldn't do better for you." Did you feel any sense that you were at fault at all?

### **Emily**

I think that- it's funny as soon as you say that I start crying -the amount of guilt that I carried for so long after that was devastating. For months all I could think about was what I did wrong and maybe if I hadn't walked my dog the day before or washed the dishes, just very irrational things in my educated healthcare mind. At the time, though, that's all I could think about. I did this journey that took 2 years and put so much time and effort into it and the one thing that I was supposed to be able to provide at the end of it, I couldn't. It was just devastating for so long. I was in therapy for quite some time. The first 3 months after Sam passed away was really tough. I remember there were days where I wouldn't get out of bed, I just couldn't. If I made it to the bathroom that was a big deal that day, I just could not function. I would get into the shower and then just sit in the shower for hours. I just couldn't function. It was awful.

Unfortunately at the time I had been dealing with some housing issues. My daughter and I had decided to relocate back to my hometown, which is a couple hours away from where we are now where my job is, and move in with my boyfriend and his kids at the time. 2 months after Sam passed, my daughter and I packed up our 4 bedroom house and put it in storage and moved in with them, and then a month later he kicked us out. It was really devastating, I just so wholeheartedly believed in that relationship and the support it had been giving me after Sam passed. It really felt like the whole world was pulled out from underneath me in a matter of months. I hit rock bottom after that. He kicked us out and I was too ashamed to tell my family or friends or anything, so I went to a hotel. We stayed there for 2 days and the second day I was there I tried to take my own life. It was a depressive state that I just can't even begin to describe. It was a dark hole, a pit with no ladder and quicksand below me. It was awful. Luckily I wasn't successful in that, and I spent some time in the hospital after that as I needed to. Then I started working with a couple more therapists, I already had a psychiatrist and a therapist I had been working with after Sam passed, and I just added more to my repertoire. In those moments in the hospital I felt so terrible, but I knew that I had to make a decision. I was either going to stay in this pit, or I was going to climb the mountain. It was one or the other there was no in between. I decided I was going to climb the mountain, and that was it I have not looked back. I have not looked back one time. I decided that life was worth living and I have my daughter, who would be devastated if anything ever happened. I regret the decision I had made and that could have possibly left her alone. Luckily I've had a lot of help since then.

One of the most devastating parts of it is when he kicked us out, his family and everybody that was involved, we never talked to them again. They disappeared and we never heard from them ever again. Not one of them. It's like they wanted to pretend that we didn't ever exist. Having gone through the loss of Sam, where he and his family were involved, then all of the sudden it was like a whole bunch of new losses. They were just gone, you don't talk to them, you don't see them. To this day I still have not ever heard from any of them ever again. It felt like a whole lot of losses on top of a devastating loss already. It was tough for me and my daughter.

**Scott**

I've heard of other people who are diagnosed with terminal cancer, and prior to the diagnosis they had lots of friends, but after that they have some people, even close friends, that they never hear from again. It's so odd to me, but for those people that never contact the person again, is it because they don't know what to say or they don't know how to help? Maybe they want to help but they don't know how, and the safest thing is to just block you out. Is that why your boyfriend kicked you out of the house?

**Emily**

I think, yeah. I mean it was a huge loss, I was a lot to deal with. As much as I thought I was trying as hard as I could, obviously his experience was different than what I thought it was or what was being communicated. I didn't know how bad it was. However, I think that he and anybody in those positions, friends of people who are going through something really really traumatic, like terminal diagnosis or loss, people are very uncomfortable with loss and trauma. Talking about these things can be very uncomfortable for them. I think human nature- not that I agree with this, I don't -but human nature is typically to just push it away. Anything that makes them uncomfortable, or that they don't want to deal with, regardless of how close the person may or may not have been to you, whether they say they love you or not. They just naturally want to get it away.

Unfortunately that hurts people in the process. Especially when a lot of these things, like loss or terminal diagnosis, is not their fault. It's not their fault that they've been diagnosed with this or if there has been a loss like mine, like with Sam. People unfortunately can't deal with it. A lot of the time it's their own mental health that they're thinking about. I get that, I do. However, it's tough to be the one in the situation that was struggling and then to be told, "I can't deal with you." It was tough. I remember a lot of times it went through my head like, "Well if he's given up on me then I'll just give up on me. He's telling me that he loves me so much and we're going to be together forever and all the fun relationship things, and then it's just gone. So if he's given up on me then I'll give up on me."

**Scott**

It sounds like daughter may have saved your life-

**Emily**

Oh yeah.

**Scott**

-if she's the one that gave you the incentive to push through.

**Emily**

Yeah. She's amazing. She saved my life in more ways than one. It's always just been her and I. Her father left when I was pregnant, so it's just been her and I. We have one of those Gilmore Girls type bonds (laughter). It's special and she's a very very important part of why I'm still here.

**Scott**

How are you doing today?

**Emily**

A lot better. A lot better. I spent all last summer with those therapists and my psychiatrists, working on talk therapy and medications. We got my sleep back on track; because it was really struggling for a while. You really, no matter what you're going through, you really can't heal if you can't have sleep. Sleep is so important to being able to process things and heal. We got that under control, and I stayed- so Sam passed February 13th, he was born on the 6th and passed on the 13th -my daughter and I essentially became homeless at the end of May. So we spent the summer with my parents and my friends, just being surrounded by people that love us. Making memories and having fun.

I decided that I wanted to try some new self care things. I got big into meditation and I really value my time when I get to walk my dog. I listen to a lot of podcasts. Oprah's podcast last summer saved my life too (laughter) she's my girl. She was great, she has a lot of really good self care things so that was really helpful. I started running every day. I would just get up and I would run. I wasn't training for anything and I wasn't trying to follow a program, I would just get up and I would run as far as I wanted to as long as I wanted to. Actually that post you saw on Instagram, I had been going for a run that morning and all of the sudden in the middle of the run I just stopped and sat down and wrote that post. I was having a moment and I thought, "I think I know what I want to say now." It was like another therapy for me. It became a time where I could process things for an hour or hour and a half. Every day I knew I had my time to think about whatever I wanted. I remember a few runs. I was running and I was formulating a fictitious letter that I would send to my ex-boyfriend or to his family. Things like that really helped. It helped to have the time to sit and think about that. It was very healing.

**Scott**

Would you recommend being a surrogate to others that might be considering it?

**Emily**

It's a tough question considering the outcome of my journey. However, yes. I really would. I believe that the surrogacy program and science, what we can do now is just amazing. The fact that other women can carry a baby for another couple. It's awe inspiring that science has been able to do that. I am a very rare case of this, it is almost next to impossible to find a story like mine, with an ending that wasn't great. Most of them are exactly what you'd expect. There's a baby and everybody's happy and there's pictures and all the great things. All the other surrogates that I became friends with on the website and the agency has a facebook group that's just for the surrogates where everybody chats. All of their stories are that. I guess I would say, don't be scared of my story, I know it's tough but whether it's surrogacy or not, pregnancy and childbirth can be dangerous in some situations. It's not always going to be great, but I would definitely recommend it. Even with the ending that I had, the life experiences and the things that

I've learned and the friends that I've gained from Sarah and Brady, I would definitely recommend it, yeah.

**Scott**

Do you think you'll ever do it again?

**Emily**

I actually offered to do it again, for Sarah and Brady. I had told them that I understood if it didn't fit with what they were looking for, or if they were looking for a different one- apparently the agency that I'd been working with was saying that a lot of other surrogates were a bit timid of the story because of the way it ended. They weren't too keen on working with them because they were too fearful of it, which I get, I understand. I had offered to do it again for them. They had graciously said thank you, but decided that for their own mental health they needed to do a completely new journey and I understand that. I completely understand, I get it. However, that being said, I don't think I would do it again for a completely new couple for a new journey. I think because of the way it went down for me and the way the situation ended, it would be a really tough journey for me mental health wise. I think I would be very scared the whole time. It would be really tough, so I don't think I could do it again.

**Scott**

It would've been really tough if you had done it again for them as well. You'd be just as scared. I just can't comprehend, what a generous thing for you to offer, to put yourself through that again. That's just amazing.

**Emily**

I think there was a part of me that thought I still owed them. I had signed up for this and I wanted to give them a child, I wanted to give them a baby. For a long time I didn't think I did, I felt like I still owed them that. With lots of work with my therapists and myself and talking to my psychiatrist, I've come to accept that I did give them what I set out to give them. I did what I set out to do. They had a son, and they will always have Sam. He's always going to be their son. I did what I set out to do, what I originally wanted to do. It just unfortunately had a really tragic ending.

**Scott**

Well if it was a routine pregnancy and surrogacy, we wouldn't be talking about it on this podcast.

**Emily**

That's true, that's true. Yeah surrogacy alone is very rare and uncommon. Then attach the tragic story of Sam, it makes it a little bit more rare.

**Scott**

If someone's interested in learning more to become a surrogate, where do they go? What are some resources that they would find?

**Emily**

In Canada, you could go to [Surrogacy.ca](http://Surrogacy.ca), that's the Canadian agency that I was part of. There's lots of information on there. The girl that runs it, her name is Sally, she's wonderful and has lots

of information. She has been a surrogate herself, so it's a great place to get some information about being a surrogate. Or if you're looking to try to find a surrogate, if you're intended parents that are looking for a surrogate in Canada you could go there. International couples do come and apply to these as well. I had couples from Germany, Switzerland, China, Australia, a whole bunch of different places that had contacted me. It's not just for Canadian couples. However it is just for Canadian surrogates. Then in the states, I found one I really liked called Surrogate.com and there's a lot of information on there about it. I also found out that in the U.S. surrogacy laws are governed by state laws, not federal. So it would be different depending what state you're in as to what the laws are surrounding being a surrogate in the U.S. I thought that was interesting. In Canada it's national, it's a federal law, so I found that interesting. Also in the U.S. you would need to budget a bit more money. The average surrogacy in the U.S. they're told to budget about 120,000 to 150,000 dollars from start to finish. Then in Canada it's about 80,000 to 100,000 dollars because of the non compensation.

### **Scott**

Well I think there may be some people that listen to this podcast and find your story to be a good resource as well. Hearing someone that's actually gone through the whole process, in spite of the outcome, I think is going to be helpful to people.

### **Emily**

Yeah, for sure. I remember wanting, or hoping, to come across somebody that had been through it while I was going through it and it's tough. So yeah, I'm happy to answer questions or talk to anybody about their journey or whatever they'd like. I'm happy to do that. I'd love to get some more attention to surrogacy and the surrogacy programs. As well as pregnancy and infant loss. It's kind of a taboo topic in the world unfortunately. It's really too bad, because if a child loses a parent, they're considered an orphan. If a spouse loses a partner, they're considered a widow. If a parent loses a child, there's no name for that. It's like we just have to try to forget that it even happened and move on. These losses, whether its miscarriage or neonatal or infant, they're just devastating for parents and families. I really would like to bring some more awareness and just the ability to have open conversation surrounding it. That it's not a taboo topic, that it's ok to talk about these losses, it doesn't have to scare everybody.

In Canada there's a really great resource, it's the PAIL network, Pregnancy and Infant Loss. They have some great resources there, they have support groups. In the U.S. they have BabyStepsFoundation.org. That's a support for pregnancy and infant loss as well. If you're experiencing any of these things, unfortunately, there are some great resources out there and people there to talk to and help you through it. You're not alone. There's tens of thousands of parents every year that go through miscarriage and pregnancy and infant loss. You're not alone, reach out. October is international pregnancy and infant loss awareness month. October 15th is pregnancy and infant loss awareness day. Internationally they try to do what we call "the wave of light" on that day. At 7pm no matter where you are in the world, you light a candle, and you keep it lit for at least an hour. Then every time zone around the world will have a wave of light to remember all of the infants and babies that were lost too soon in the world.

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If you'd like to contact Emily, her email address will be in the show notes for this episode at [WhatWasThatLike.com/90](https://www.whatwasthatlike.com/90). I'll also have links to the other resources she mentioned. When I planned the date for the release of this episode, here in October of 2021, I had no idea that October is International Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness Month. I like how it worked out though!

And in keeping with the pregnancy theme – one week from today we'll have a special bonus episode. This one will be full of listener stories about childbirth. I think you'll enjoy it.

And the newest Raw Audio bonus episode, Raw Audio 18, is live right now and available to \$5 a month Patrons. Not to mention, you get new episodes of this podcast without any ads. In the latest episode –

A woman calls 911 in a panic because her ex-husband is breaking in –

**Caller**

Please send somebody! Send somebody right now. I think my ex-husband is going to try to break in the house.

A woman calls 911 because of her deceased husband – but she doesn't quite tell the whole story –

**911 Dispatch**

Can you get in there with him?

**Caller**

I've been there trying to do mouth to mouth but he's cold and stiff.

And a woman calls 911 after discovering her deceased mother –

**911 Dispatch**

How old is your mother?

**Caller**

Oh God. She's 82. I think she's dead. I think she's been murdered or killed or something.

You can get access to all the 911 Raw Audio bonus episodes by signing up as a supporter at [WhatWasThatLike.com/support](https://www.whatwasthatlike.com/support).

And in the podcast Facebook group recently, we talked about the concept of regret. The question was, have you ever thought about doing something, and decided not to do it, then you later regretted it? I posted my own personal story related to this, and a bunch of listeners posted theirs too. In that group, we love thought-provoking discussions. And we even sometimes talk about the podcast episodes! If you'd like to join us, head over to [WhatWasThatLike.com/facebook](https://www.whatwasthatlike.com/facebook).

And this week's Listener Story actually came from that Facebook discussion about regrets. I hope you enjoy it. And I'll be back here in one week, with lots of stories about childbirth. See you then.

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### **Caller**

Hi Scott. I'm pretty much addicted to your podcast. I binge listened to it until I was all caught up and I can't wait for each episode that comes out. So keep up the good work.

You had asked recently if people had stories about regrets that they have. My regret involved a young man, I'm going to call him Joe, and I'd heard a rumor in the community that he was kind of a reckless driver. Not long after that I heard that Joe was dating my friend's daughter. We weren't close friends, kind of acquaintances you know? We knew each other's names and each other's children. I'm going to call the daughter Sue. Joe was dating Sue. I thought about saying something to Sue's mother about Joe's reputation of driving recklessly, but I thought, "I don't really have any facts, it's just rumors. I'm just going to try to mind my own business." Not long after that, Joe and Sue were in a car together, and Joe ran a stop sign, and Sue was killed. The other car involved in the accident had 3 people in it and 2 of them died. It was a father and his teenage daughter, they were killed in that accident.

Ever since then, if I've had an opportunity to speak up for someone or try to advocate for them, I am just compelled to do that. The accident happened very close to my parents home and the family put up a little cross and memorial near that intersection. So I think about that everytime I visit my parents. I'd just like to encourage other listeners to follow those little nudges. That inner voice that says, "Hey something isn't right here." You never know, if we speak up we may be able to impact someone's life for the good. We may be able to save a life. Keep up the good work, thanks.