Episode 191: Kavina caught her little sister at birth

Hey, it's an off week for the podcast, but here I am anyway.

This is Scott Johnson, and you're listening to What Was That Like. Usually I have a guest on to talk about something really unusual that they experienced – like having their arm torn off, or being buried in an avalanche, or witnessing a murder. The guest comes on and tells the details of what happened. And there are more than 190 episodes to binge with those amazing stories.

But today is a different kind of amazing story! Today's a bonus episode. As you might know, the last three Fridays have been personal stories of people who survived the terrorist attacks on 9/11. Those are really important stories to share, to make sure we never forget what happened on that day.

But after three weeks of tragedy and trauma, I thought it would be nice to have a FUN episode. And this one fits that bill perfectly.

Today you're going to hear from a mother, Kiona, and her oldest daughter, Kavina.

Kiona is a birth worker, and she's been involved with or witnessed more than 140 births. She has a podcast called Birth As We Know It, where guests come on and tell their stories about birth.

Well – in one of her episodes, Kiona interviewed her daughter Kavina, who was just 9 years old at the time of their conversation. When she was 4, Kavina was present for the birth of her younger brother, Kairo. And when she was 8, Kavina actually caught her little sister, Katana, as she was born.

So today, you'll hear Kiona's podcast episode where she talked with little Kavina about what it was like for each of those experiences. I can tell you up front, this conversation will make you smile. In the show notes I'll have pictures of Kiona with her husband Kumar and all their children (yes, everyone in their family has a name that starts with K – including their dogs Kobe and Koko).

So I hope you enjoy this adorable mother-daughter conversation. And afterward, I spoke with each of them briefly because you know I always have some questions.

Kiona
Welcome to Birth As We Know It, a podcast that is dedicated to recognizing the many different ways that birth unfolds. I am your host, Kiona Nessenbaum. I have experienced birth as a doula, a student midwife, a birth assistant, and as a mother of three amazing children of my own. After attending over 140 births, I've realized that each birth experience is truly unique. So make sure you subscribe and join me as we are guided through many different birth experiences through the lens of the storyteller. Please be aware that some of these stories can be triggering to hear, so feel free to pause, take a breath, and come back and listen whenever you're ready. With that said, let's prep ourselves to dive deep and get detailed about what really happens in the birth space.

All right. Hello everyone, and welcome back to the Birth As We Know It podcast. Today, I have a very special guest with me. I have my daughter, Kavina. Kavina, would you say hello?

Kavina
Hello everybody.

Kiona
So tell us a little bit about yourself. How old are you?

Kavina
I am nine years old and my favorite color is, like, the Galaxy.

Kiona
Oh, the Galaxy. Okay, awesome. What's your favorite activity to do?

Kavina
Probably like jam to music and stuff, but I also like to color.

Kiona
Do you just color or do you draw your own pictures?

Kavina
Color, but I also like to draw a little bit more.

Kiona
Okay. What's your favorite thing to draw right now?

Kavina
Probably anime. I really like to draw anime.

Kiona
Nice. I like that. I will actually post a picture of one of your favorite anime drawings - if you're okay with that - on the website.

Kavina
Okay. Yeah.

Kiona
So that people can see your anime drawings of today. Today, we're going to be talking about two birth experiences. We're going to be talking about Kairo's birth experience and we're also going to be talking about Katana's birth experience. Since Kairo was first, let's go ahead and talk about Kairo's birth experience. Do you remember when we told you when we were expecting Kairo?

Kavina
I do. How I remember it is because when we were both sitting on the couch - daddy, you and then me - and we are just eating this, like, taffy candy. I don't remember what it was called but it was really good. Then you were like– I think Daddy or you were like, "Guess what?" And I was like, "What?" I don't know who said it but it was either you or Daddy - I'm just going to say it was daddy. Daddy was like, "You're going to be a big sister!" And I was like, "Yay!"

Kiona

Do you remember how old you were when we told you?

Kavina
I think I might have just turned four because that's when I remember when Kairo was born. I just turned four.

Kiona
So you were like around three and a half.

Kavina
Yeah.

Kiona
And then you had just turned four a few months before Kairo was born. What were your feelings going through your head when you found out that you were going to be a big sister?

Kavina
I was really excited and I was still processing because I didn't really know what a big sister was, but I was like, "Yay. I'm so excited!" And then daddy was like, "There's going to be a baby in the house." And I was like, "A baby?" That's when it kind of clicked in my mind.

Kiona
That's awesome. I love that you still kind of remember that feeling. Did you know that mommy and daddy were trying to make it to where you were having a sibling?

Kavina
I didn't, but I can tell why because, sometimes, I get really lonely and I want somebody to play with me but it's not exactly that right now.

Kiona
Yeah. Did we do anything to help you prepare for being at the birth? I remember talking to you a little bit.

Kavina
Yeah.

Kiona
Can you go into a little bit of detail of what you remember of how we talked to you?

Kavina
I think I remember us sitting on our bed and just having this full conversation, and we were like, "We may have to watch the baby and change their diaper and stuff, so then we won't have as much attention on only you. We're going to also have to care for the baby too."

Kiona
Mm-hmm.

Kavina

Like, getting me prepared.

Kiona
Yeah. Getting you prepared to be a sibling. Do you remember, like, what we did to prepare you for the birth? Because we asked you if you wanted to be around because we were having a home birth for Kairo. We asked you if you wanted to be present in the room when your brother was going to be born. Do you remember that at all?

Kavina
I do not.

Kiona
That's okay. I can just touch on it a little bit. I remember talking to you a little bit about asking if you wanted to be around. You were four at the time, so I spoke to you in a way that was a little bit more understanding for that age. So, I showed you a couple of birth videos, home birth videos.

Kavina
Mm-hmm, I remember that part.

Kiona
Yeah. At first, I tried to show you ones that weren't too–

Kavina
–drastic.

Kiona
Exactly. They weren't too drastic. But then, we did end up watching one where the baby was coming out and I remember you being a little shocked. Did you feel any kind of way as you watched my belly grow throughout my pregnancy?

Kavina
I don't think I really noticed it until you actually, like, had the belly and I was like *gasp*. I remember, looking back at all these photos, I was always, like, hugging the belly or kissing it. I remember I was really excited.

Kiona
Yeah, I remember that too. One photo in particular that I remember is we were swimming and I was in my bathing suit and so were you. And then you were hugging me and kissing my belly in the bathroom. I was bald at that time. Do you remember that?

Kavina
Yeah, not exactly bald, but you got a buzz cut.

Kiona
Yeah, that's right. I did. I got a buzz cut. All right, let's go ahead and bounce forward to his birth. Do you remember at all–

Kavina

I do remember some stuff. I remember when you were in the bathtub and daddy was, like, massaging your head and stuff, making you feel comfortable, and there was, like, this huge yellow bowl and I just kept on getting bath water and pouring it on your tummy because that's what the midwife said to do because I saw her doing it and I was like, "I want to help. I want to try." And I just kept doing that and I was like, "I'm helping and I just felt super cool."

Then, Momo, my auntie, was taking photos and stuff. I remember, in two of the photos, I snagged in and I would just, like, get into the photo and then it was funny because then she actually let me be in one of the photos.

Kiona
I think that's where the famous selfie photo came from.

Kavina
Yeah.

Kiona
That's awesome. Do you remember anything else about the birth?

Kavina
I do remember at the end when Kairo came out. That wasn't traumatizing but it was a day that I would remember. Once Kairo came out, the water did get a little bloody and I didn't really think much of it. Then, Kairo– we were cutting his umbilical cord and stuff like that. Then, you held him for a couple of seconds because you were like, "Wow, I finally popped out this baby." Then, daddy took the baby and then he was, like, rocking it. Then, I remember somebody gave you a banana.

Kiona
Yeah. I thought it was you that gave me a banana.

Kavina
I think Juju handed me the banana and then I gave it to you. And then I remember how you passed out and then it was kind of scary. I cried because it was kind of scary. Then, my mom's midwife, her name is Mercedes, she was kind of freaking out and she was, like - not over-exaggerating but - really scared because this is the first time this has happened, maybe, I think. She called 911 and I was really like, "What's going on?" Then, I heard sirens and that's when I got scared. I kept on going to my dad but my dad was holding the baby. I think one of my family members went into the ambulance with my mom. Was it daddy?

Kiona
It was Juju.

Kavina
Juju. My grandma went into the ambulance with my mom and my dad was getting all the clothes on Kairo because it was really cold. I remember I was really scared and I didn't know what was going on. My dad was, like, putting Kairo in his car seat and stuff and I was like, "What's going on? Why is everybody on the move?" Everybody was getting in their cars and stuff. Then, I remember Kairo getting his seat inside of the car and I would just buckle it up. I didn't know what was happening. We were driving to the hospital to go see my mom. I remember I was mad because I didn't get to go

into the room. I was so mad but I was also kind of cold because I was wearing my itty bitty little shorts. You remember those - like, the pink good polka dots or leopard prints?

Kiona
Yeah.

Kavina
I was scared.

Kiona
Yeah. Tell me more about that. Once you got to the hospital, do you remember anything there?

Kavina
I remember it was really white - white floors and stuff. I remember, like, when Daddy went into the room, people were taking turns going in. I don't really exactly remember because it was, like, five years ago but I do remember I was just sitting in the chair and one of my family members was holding me and keeping me safe. I didn't know what was going on. Everybody had to, like, care for Kairo and stuff and I was like, "What's going on?" And I don't really remember stuff after that but I do remember how we got home safe.

Kiona
Yeah, I was going to say, do you just remember us coming home. That's good. Do you remember the thing that you said to me the day after your brother was born that made me really sad?

Kavina
I don't think so. Do you mean that time when I was crying?

Kiona
Yeah.

Kavina
Okay. It just slipped out of my mind but I remember I was like, "Mom, I need your help." I forgot.

Kiona
You told me that I didn't love you anymore.

Kavina
Oh, yeah. I remember that because we were changing the baby's diaper and then I just ran into my room and I had this huge unicorn, like, plushy stuffed animal and I just started crying in it, and it was in my closet too, and it was so sad.

Kiona
Okay. How was developing that relationship with your brother once he was here?

Kavina
It was really fun because I remember all the times I've been playing with him and stuff and all the videos. Those were super fun. When he got a little bit older and like he was kind of walking and stuff, the first thing I did was I used to dress him up in, like, a dress and put on all these bracelets. I

remember a time where I painted his nails and I did his hair. I remember your reaction and you were like, “What?”

Kiona
I was like, “Where did you get that?” But yeah, I remember one video that we have is of Kairo in, like, a green fairy Halloween costume or something.

Kavina
Oh yeah.

Kiona
If I can find a picture, I’ll also put that on the website.So that is your experience with Kairo’s birth.

Kavina
Mm-hmm.

Kiona
Do you want to now dive into Katana’s birth?

Kavina
Yes. I was waiting for this moment.

Kiona
Okay.

Kavina
Because I remember it so clearly.

Kiona
Okay, wait. Before you dive into the birth, let’s talk about the moment that you found out we were having Katana.

Kavina
Oh yeah, that was really exciting. There was a video. I remember you gave a card to Daddy and it was like, baby Ness number three or something. Then, I walked into the room and I was wearing, like, my gown or something and we were playing pretend - Me and Kairo. I walked upstairs and then I was like, “Mom, are you pregnant?” And then you were like, “What?” We were talking and stuff, and then you were like, “I’m pregnant!” And I was like *gasp*. Kairo didn’t get that click like I did when you told me. He was like, “Huh?” Then, my mom was like, “We’re going to have a baby!” And then, Kairo was like, “Aww. I wanted to be the baby.”

Kiona
Well, he’s like, “I’m a baby.” But then, first, we had to stop him from putting the pregnancy test in his mouth. Do you remember that?

Kavina
Yeah.

Kiona
And then we had to explain to him that just because another baby's coming doesn't mean that he's seven, because you were seven.

Kavina
Yeah.

Kiona
Were you seven? Yeah. You were seven. You were seven when we found out about her, and he's like, "I'm seven!" And we were like, "No, you're still three."

Kavina
Yeah. He was like, "Now that I'm a big brother, I'm seven." Because I was seven and I was a big sister.

Kiona
I think it's cute how he made that kind of connection in his mind.

Kavina
Yeah.

Kiona
I remember you and Daddy cried.

Kavina
Mm-hmm. I ran up to my dad and he picked me up. Then, I remember, in the video, he noticed that there was a hidden camera, and then he just went into the bathroom and was, like, wiping all the tears and he was like, "We're so excited."

Kiona
Yeah. "I'm not crying."

Kavina
I was the first one to find the hidden camera though, and I was like, "HA!"

Kiona
That's true. That is very true. How was the pregnancy from your perspective?

Kavina
The pregnancy was really fun. I remember when we were going around and we were, like, traveling. We weren't traveling but we were going to places and I remember that one time when you wore that yellow dress. It was really pretty on you.

Kiona
Oh, thank you.

Kavina

Yeah, I remember when we went to the park and then there was, like, the huge trees, and then there was this old ice cream truck. Remember?

Kiona
Mm-hmm.

Kavina
It was all brown and we got some ice cream. Kairo got, like, a Sonic one. He's probably four or three.

Kiona
He was still three.

Kavina
Okay. And then, it was for my eighth birthday. Do you remember?

Kiona
I do. And you got a SpongeBob one.

Kavina
Mm-hmm. I remember it melted though, and I was sad. It fell.

Kiona
But you ate the gumball eyes already. Do you remember how mommy had to take a lot more naps?

Kavina
Yeah, we were really tired.

Kiona
How do you think mommy felt near the end of my pregnancy?

Kavina
Probably relieved. Oh, I remember that time when we were in the Walmart parking lot and then my mom was like, "Please tell this baby to come out." And then my dad was like, "Not in the Walmart parking lot." And then my mom was like, "But just tell the baby to come out."

Kiona
Yeah. That was a funny moment. I forgot about that. Let's go ahead and dive into the birth.

Kavina
Okay. I remember the birth. It was so good. I was waiting because I think this was her due date, right?

Kiona
Well, it started the day before her due date, but she was born on her due date.

Kavina

And I was like, “Please wake me up.” Because I had a really good feeling that we would probably have to wake up. I was like, “Mom, I don’t want to go to sleep. I feel like something’s going to happen.” And then you were like, “Don’t worry, I’ll wake you up.” And I was like, “Okay.” And I went to sleep. Then, I remember you being woken up and I was like, “Yes, I’m so excited!” You were in the bathroom when you were braiding your hair because, last birth, you didn’t have hair, so you didn’t have to braid it. We didn’t want the hair to get in like the water stuff. We were getting ready. You went in the car and then Mercedes went first - my mom’s doula.

Kiona
Midwife.

Kavina
She went first and then we were all going. We were in the car and I was really excited, but the birth took so long. My mom’s midwife took her in first and we were still getting our stuff from the car. I don’t think we got stuff but we were still getting out of the car. We went and she showed us our room and my mom kind of sat on the bed a little bit and I was just sitting down. I noticed a lot of my family members were there and it was really fun, but it took, like, a lot for it to really happen. I remember she was, like, doing ultrasounds, I think.

Kiona
She was using the doppler to get the baby’s heart rate.

Kavina
Yeah. And then what were those things? It was, like, a little white tube.

Kiona
Little white tubes?

Kavina
Remember? In the photo or something? I think she gave you a shot–

Kiona
Oh, an IV. She gave me an IV.

Kavina
What is that for?

Kiona
It was to make sure that I was hydrated throughout labor. If I needed any medication like Pitocin, postpartum, like extra, then they could put it in through the IV bag after the baby is born.

Kavina
Yeah, and I remember you just kept walking around and stuff like that. You had a sweater, but then you took off your sweater, and then you were, like, walking around trying to get labor started and it didn’t start for a long time. I remember playing like Toca Boca Life on my mom’s phone with my auntie, and we were just waiting for something to happen. Was Kairo asleep? No, I don’t think he was asleep. We were trying to play. The worst part was we had to wear a mask and I was so mad and I was like, “Ugh.”

Kiona
Why did you have to wear your mask?

Kavina
Because there was covid time, and I was like, “Mm.” And Kairo was just, like, like waking up because he was so tired from the car trip.

Kiona
Well, yeah, he eventually did fall asleep though.

Kavina
It was funny.

Kiona
And you took a little bit of a nap too.

Kavina
Yeah. I remember you were walking around and then you went into your bathing suit, and then you went into the bathtub to see if that would help labor get started and it didn't really help, so you started kind of standing up and stuff. That’s when it was, like, a ton of hours passed and I was getting tired, so daddy was like, “Let’s go take a nap in the other room.” And I was like, “Okay.” But I really did not want to take a nap, so my dad let me play games on his phone and then I fell asleep. Then, I remember somebody– was it Delilah? I think Delilah walked into the room and she woke us up and she was like, “Labor’s going to happen,” or something like that. I remember walking back there and then you had, like, this huge blanket on and you were just walking in the halls. Remember?

Kiona
Mm-hmm.

Kavina
You looked pretty scary though. It was like a white thing.

Kiona
I just had a robe on.

Kavina
Oh, for some reason, I thought it was like a huge white blanket. Then, I just sat down and stuff like that - I don’t remember. I remember you kind of went into the pool and then I think that’s when labor started.

Kiona
I think you’re missing the moment when you guys were sleeping and you guys didn’t come back until someone went and got you guys because they broke my water for me, and I had asked for you guys to come back because it was a moment where I was like, “I need my husband.” So they went and got daddy, and you came along too because you were going to do what?

Kavina
I was going to go in the bathtub with you.

Kiona
Mm-hmm. To do what?

Kavina
I'm going to catch the baby.

Kiona
Mm-hmm. Let's talk about that.

Kavina
Okay. I remember it was really exciting. There was so much stuff that happened after - I don't think I told you though. So I went into the bathroom, I changed, and I got my bathing suit on. It was like a mermaid on duty. Then, I went to the bathtub and then Mercedes was like, "Just tell me when you want to come out because this could be uncomfortable." I wasn't traumatized but it's a thing that I will remember because I was sitting in there and then Mercedes was like– I think somebody was holding your hand. I think our photographer was holding your hand.

Kiona
At one point she was, "Yes."

Kavina
Yeah. Then, I was just sitting down and then brown stuff came. It was blood, I think. Was it blood?

Kiona
I don't know. It could be. It wasn't poop.

Kavina
I know. I was like, "Mom, you pooped."

Kiona
It could have been poop, but nobody said I pooped. But poop happens all the time in labor.

Kavina
Okay. I was kind of scared because it was coming towards me and I kind of scooted it over and then the water started getting a little bit colder. When I did want to come out, I noticed that Miss Mercedes was in duty. She was in duty, but like when I did want to kind of come out, um, I noticed that she was, I didn't want her to have to put in all her work to me when you were giving labor. So what I was just doing and I was waiting and I was just sitting down, and I just saw stuff coming and it was just, like, all this weird stuff. But then, I remember I saw the head and I was like, "Oh my gosh." And I was so excited but I was kind of scared at the same time because I was like, "What if I don't do it right?" Something like that.

Mercedes was the first one to touch the head, but it was with gloves on. So she was just like, "Do you want to feel your baby?" And I was like, "Okay." And I just felt her head and her hair was so gooey and I was like, "Hmm." I don't really remember that much but I remember I had to put my

hands out or something. And then, as they say, she “tooth-pasted out”. She tooth-pasted out and I caught her, and I was like, *gasp*. And then Ms. Mercedes took her, I think.

Kiona
Both of you, I think, helped her come to my belly, right?

Kavina
Yeah. And then I was like, “Hey…” And then, Ms Mercedes was kind of done, I think. So then, I was like, “Can I come out please, please?” Then, I got out and I remember I was soaking wet. So Tia Ana went to the bathroom to come help me change, and then everybody was, like, crying. And then I was just crying. Then, Tia Ana sat on the toilet and just hugged me for, like, 10 seconds and I was just like, “Okay, let’s get back. I’m going to see the baby.” Then, I remember you were out. I think you went to go change or something.

Kiona
I know that I was naked for a while because we got on the bed and then I birthed a placenta. Do you remember that? Or were you still in the bathroom?

Kavina
I remember that. It was kind of weird. I remember my auntie almost fainted. Papa had to leave the room.

Kiona
Papa is my dad.

Kavina
Yeah. He had to leave the room. He did not want to see that. And I remember, like, after Katana was sleeping– not sleeping but my mom was resting, laying on the bed, and then they were, like, washing Katana off and stuff, I think.

Kiona
No, they didn’t wash her off, but they were– after we got settled in on the bed, the placenta was born. I didn’t have any tears, so they didn’t have to suture me, but I was there and we were kind of just, like, hanging out. I nursed her for the first time.

Kavina
One more thing.

Kiona
Yeah?

Kavina
We soaked a hat in blood.

Kiona
Yeah. With her head.

Kavina

We soaked a hat with her head because her head was really bloody. So we just put a hat on her head and then we let our dogs smell it so then our dogs could, like, smell her and know that she isn't a predator in this house. She is more likely to be a prey - I'm just kidding. But she is just, like, not a guest, but she's a new member of the family and we went to, like, welcome her.

Kiona
Yeah. Part of the pack.

Kavina
Mm-hmm.

Kiona
Yeah, that's true. We let the dog smell the first hat that she ever wore and it just happened to be really bloody. It wasn't, like, soaked and dripping in blood, but it did have, like, blood and birthy residue on it. And then after we were settled in and I nursed her for the first time, everybody kind of left and then we did the newborn exam - and that's actually the photo on our website. It's the newborn exam of you holding or touching Katana - not holding her but, like, holding her hand or touching her during the newborn exam with Mercedes.

Kavina
Oh yeah.

Kiona
And then I have this really awesome photo of you holding her for the first time.

Kavina
That one...

Kiona
Yeah. And then there's one photo that I took while we were at home where you're holding her and you just look so big and it made me sad because I was like, "My first baby is big." I was really emotional about it.

Kavina
And I remember I had to watch Katana a little bit because you needed to wash off, I think, and then daddy had to help you because your legs were quivering.

Kiona
Quivering?

Kavina
Yeah. I think,

Kiona
I don't know. I don't remember that part. Maybe going to the bathroom or something.

Kavina

You needed help and I watched Katana and I felt so proud watching her and I was just like, “Oh, a little baby. She ‘s so cute!” Her eyes were bigger than her head though, like, seriously. Her eyes were so big and bright and she looked so bold and proud.

Kiona
Yeah, she did. She came and claimed her space really quickly. So how was developing the relationship with Katana after having experienced it with Kairo and doing that?

Kavina
Yeah. It was different than I did with Kairo because you were, like, a little bit more protective of Kairo because he was the second one. I’m not saying like you weren’t protective of Katana but–

Kiona
I see what you’re saying.

Kavina
Yeah. Kairo was like, “We got to be careful and stuff like that.” But I don’t really remember that much. I remember from all the videos that I was just like, “Oh yeah, I remember that!”

Kiona
So how was coming home and being a family of five for you?

Kavina
It was really fun. I remember we got pizza and watched AGT or something - America’s Got Talent - and it was really fun and I was holding her and stuff and it was really fun. I remember she was in, like, her little hat, and her cheeks were so puffy. It was like she was really swollen and I was like, “When can I kiss her?” Because I remember I couldn’t kiss her because her face was swollen and stuff.

Kiona
Yeah. And I remember we kind of told you guys to not kiss her for a while because she was so fresh and it was sick season and we just wanted to make sure that she was in our house for a while. I think it was, like, a day or two before you guys were able to kiss her. That’s my mindset. Oh yeah, all the kisses. Let’s bounce back. I want you to think of Kairo’s birth again and tell me the first thing that comes to mind as the most memorable moment from his birth for you.

Kavina
Probably when you were cutting his cord. I think daddy cut his cord.

Kiona
When you were cutting Kairo’s cord.

Kavina
I cut his cord.

Kiona
Mm-hmm.

Kavina
I remember cutting it and I was scared because he started crying and then there was, like, little blood drips.

Kiona
Yeah, I remember you asking if it hurt him. Just to reassure you again, it did not hurt him. Now, let's think of Katana's birth and what was the most memorable moment from her birth for you.

Kavina
Right when you say that, I think of the placenta. I can remember that. I remember the part where I was in the tub a little bit more. When I think of it right now– I can think about it, but it was just like a lot of stuff coming out .

Kiona
So you think about, like, all of the birthy stuff that was coming out of my body before your sister was born.

Kavina
Yes.

Kiona
So here's a question. I know that we have talked and debriefed a lot about Katana's birth because, at one point, you did say that it was potentially a little bit traumatizing for you because you didn't quite understand what you signed up for. Now that we've had time to talk about it and discuss it a little bit more - and your answer can be yes or no - do you think that you would ever do it again if you had the chance?

Kavina
Yes.

Kiona
Yeah?

Kavina
Yeah.

Kiona
Yeah. You said that with such pride

Kavina
And I was, like, "Anytime."

Kiona
Yeah. That's cool. That's awesome. So would you just do it for anybody in the streets?

Kavina
No.

Kiona
No?

Kavina
Mm-mm. I would do it for Tia Ana's baby. .

Kiona
Okay. One day. Let's not fast-forward her life too much. Was there anything that we did to help you prepare that you would like to share with the world who has, like, kids that may want to be in the birth space?

Kavina
Let them know that it may be different and it may be really memorable. Just let them have a chance to, like, remember it because they will always remember their siblings - they will remember their birth maybe - I don't know. But you got to let them have memories of not just like, "Yeah, I saw my little sister," but maybe like, "I was holding my mom's hand" or something that, like this one little dot, like I was taking the photos or holding her hand. I gave her a towel for her forehead, something like that.

Kiona
So you're saying to the world to not automatically just, like, exclude your child from the birth experience. Maybe ask them if they want to be a part of it and give them a job like taking photos or filling the water.

Kavina
Like, let them be a part of it too - not as the audience but, like, maybe helping.

Kiona
A part of the team...

Kavina
Yeah.

Kiona
So it felt good for you to be a part of the team both times even though both of them were scary in their own ways?

Kavina
Yes.

Kiona
Do you think you learned a lot from the experiences?

Kavina
Yeah.

Kiona
That's good. Awesome. Well, thank you for sharing your perspective with me, baby.

Kavina
Mm-hmm.

Kiona
Yay. I'm excited. I think that the world will love hearing your perspective because, in the first birth, you were four and you still remember some details. And the second birth, you were eight and it was more recent and you remember some details of that. Thank you for being on the podcast, Kavina. I love you so much and I have learned a lot from you just listening to this and listening to you tell your perspective because I wasn't aware of all of these things that you remembered. I wasn't sure how long this episode was going to be and it's longer than I thought it was going to be. So I think that it's really awesome that you've remembered so many details and that you learned from it. All right. Love you. Let's say bye.

Kavina
Love you. Bye, guys.

Kiona
Thanks for listening.

Scott
Hey, not so fast. I had a couple of questions for Kavina. When you caught your little sister Katana when she was born, you were just eight.

Kavina
Yes, I was.

Scott
What were you the most nervous about or what were you thinking about?

Kavina
I was nervous that she would fall because I didn't really know. I thought that she would hit her head or something on the bottom of the bathtub. So that's what I was nervous about.

Scott
Like she might show up quicker than you were ready for, maybe. If mom ever had another baby, would you want to do that again?

Kavina
Yes, absolutely.

Scott
You seem pretty excited about it. Have you ever thought you might someday become a birth worker like your mom?

Kavina
I have thought about it especially in kindergarten because I was in the influence of– yeah, my mom's a birth doula, so I want to be that too.

Scott
So that might be your career someday.

Kavina
Yeah.

Scott
I think you'd be good at it because your mom's pretty good at it.

Kavina
Yeah, she is.

Scott
Well, Kavina, thanks for letting our listeners hear your story. I also spoke with Kiona. Why was it important for you to have Kavina there to catch her little sister?

Kiona
I thought that it was important for her to see what birth can be like just in a different setting because birth in films and on TV is not realistic. So, I included her in the process of my pregnancy as much as possible. She was there during my prenatals and was touching my belly using the Doppler, helping my midwife Mercedes measure my belly and fundus, and all of that.

Scott
So she was really involved.

Kiona
And just including her in the conversations. She was even present during my first cervical sweep. I asked her if she wanted to be present and she was like, “Yeah.” And I was like, “Are you ready though? Because Mercedes' entire hand is going to go inside my body, and she's like, “Okay, yeah. Let's try it.” And so we did it. I told her, “I'm probably going to be breathing through this because I know that it's going to have some sensations that will be uncomfortable, but just know that I'm okay.” And that was all before it all started. Then, it happened and I was definitely breathing some deep breaths. Something that could have potentially been really scary for her is when Mercedes brought her hand out. There was, like, a lot of bloody show on it - so it wasn't like just a clean glove - and she was like, “Ugh.”

Scott
Some adults couldn't handle that.

Kiona
Yeah. So I asked her if she wanted to be present when I got my second cervical sweep. She's like, “No, it's okay, mom. I’m okay.”

Scott
I'll pass on that this time. So, that's good. You had talked with her about it ahead of time. In your work as a birth worker, have you had pregnant parents who didn't want their other young children present for the birth because they thought it might be traumatizing?

Kiona
Oh, yeah, absolutely, especially parents that have had a really traumatic first birth experience and they wanted to have, like, a redemptive birth in a different setting because they didn't want to expose their kid to that trauma to have them be seen in such a vulnerable place where they feel not necessarily weak but scared because, as parents, we want to be strong for our kiddos, and when you know that you're scared of what's going to happen, you want to protect your kids from that.

Scott
What's your advice for someone considering having their other children present at birth?

Kiona
Oh, absolutely include them in the team, give them a job, have them be your water person, have them be your snack giver, keep them involved, let them ask the provider questions if it's appropriate because they're learning too.

Scott
I love the idea of giving them a job because then, “Wow, I'm helping this to happen.” That's just great.

Kiona
Yeah.

Scott
Well, Kavina certainly handled it well, and I'm sure a lot of that has to do with how you and Kumar communicate so openly with your kids. Okay. Before we wrap up, I want to talk about your podcast. I'm not a birth worker. I personally don't ever plan to give birth, but I love your show and I listen to every episode. So tell everyone what your episodes are about.

Kiona
My show is called Birth As We Know It, and it is a birth story and birth experience podcast that is solely dedicated to recognizing the many different ways that birth unfolds. What makes my podcast different from other birth story podcasts is I interview everyone. I interviewed the birthing person. I interview their partner, their provider, their birth worker or birth support, and anybody else that's in the birth space that feels like they want to share their perspective. The reason I do that is because I am a huge believer in the fact that whoever is present in the birth space is impacted by that birth in some way and it's interesting to hear different perspectives. For example, providers– that's their job. They can go to multiple births a day depending on what kind of provider they are and the birth that they go to at the beginning of the day can impact how they act in the next. It's interesting.

Scott
Your show has so many similarities to mine because every episode is a story and some are super happy and some are really traumatic and some have both. But that's real life, right? You don't shy away from the tough ones.

Kiona
Yeah, no, I intentionally don't shy away from the tough ones. That's because every single story deserves to be heard - even the ones that are hard to hear - because if you blatantly ignore the ones

that are hard, or tough, or challenging, or traumatic, you're 1) making the person that experienced that feel invisible and unseen, 2) not allowing the space for them to express how they felt in that situation or go through a process of healing through storytelling, and 3) it can impact The way that someone else has their birth. And what I mean by that is if someone is going through pregnancy and they have this fear of having a specific traumatic experience and then they hear it on my podcast, they can say, “Oh, I can learn from their mistakes and ask these questions and do these things differently, which is such an amazing aspect of storytelling.”

Scott
And you've got almost 70 episodes now, so there's lots of content to binge. If someone wants to tell their birth story, are you looking for guests?

Kiona
Absolutely. Always.

Scott
What's the process for that?

Kiona
The main thing would be to go to my website, which is birthasweknowitpodcast.com, and you would fill out the guest request form and answer those questions. I'll get the request. I read through every single one of them and you will hear back directly from me.

Scott
And how can people find your show?

Kiona
My website, birthaswenowitpodcast.com, or they can go on anywhere they listen to podcasts. Just look up the Birth As We Know It podcast. And if you want to be more specific, you can do Birth As We Know It, birth stories and birth experiences.

Scott
Kiona, congratulations on being a mom and thanks for bringing these important stories to the world.

Kiona
Thank you so much, Scott.

Scott
You can see pictures of Kavina and Kiona and the rest of their family, as well as a full transcript of this episode, at the show notes – WhatWasThatLike.com/191.

And here’s a fun fact – after I asked Kavina my questions about how she felt being at those births, she had a few questions for me – like, how do you handle your own emotions when your guest is telling you a really traumatic story? And, how do you get your guests to really open up and be vulnerable? I mean come on, she’s only 11 and she’s thinking of things like this? Pretty sure she’s going to be a podcaster some day.

So be sure to check out the Birth As We Know It podcast. You and I both love great stories, and that's exactly what Kiona brings in every episode. I honestly never would have predicted that I'd be a regular listener to a birth stories podcast, but I really do listen to every episode. It's really good.

Got a voice mail about the recent 3-part series on 9/11:

Cindy
Hi Scott, my name is Cindy and I'm a huge fan of your podcast. I've been listening to the September 11th editions and love them so much and wanted to suggest that you talk to some of the families from the United 93 flight that was grounded by 40 heroes that took the plane over and prevented, I'm sure, quite a few deaths. The New York City tragedy was awful and so sad, but I do think that the families from the disaster at the Pentagon and also in Pennsylvania should be recognized as well as the World Trade Center and New York City firefighter and first responders and heroes in New York City. Anyway, just thought I'd share that with you. I've been thinking about it as I'm listening to the podcast. Keep up the lovely work. Such a great show. Thanks, Scott.

Scott
I appreciate that feedback. Honestly, I've been wanting to do a 9/11 episode with someone who was in the Pentagon. But those stories aren't nearly as easy to find as people who were in New York City that day. But the good news is – I think I have found a person with a Pentagon story. Still in the early stages but that could very well be the 9/11 episode for next September.

And I have a correction because I screwed up. I recently mentioned that I co-hosted a show where we reviewed season 3 of the hit Hulu show, The Bear. I love that show. The podcast I was on is called Eat Your Content. My goof was that when I mentioned it recently, I said the wrong first name for the host of the show. He messaged me and said "Hey Scott, thanks for the plug, but my name is Rich and you called me Mike". Yeah, felt pretty stupid after that one. I have no idea where I got that name from because I know he's Rich. Anyway, go check out the Eat Your Content podcast – hosted by RICH.

Graphics for this episode were created by Bob Bretz. Full episode transcription was created by James Lai.

And now, here we are at the Listener Story. This is an audio story, 5-10 minutes long, sent in by a listener. This is how we end every episode. And we'd love to hear your story – just record it on your phone in a quiet environment, and email it to me – Scott@WhatWasThatLike.com.

This week's story is from a listener who witnessed a motorcycle crash, and got involved.

Stay safe – and I'll see you back here next week with a Tuesday Question, and a brand new What Was That Like story.

(Listener story)

My boyfriend at the time - actually my fiancé at the time - and I went to a swimming hall, a legal swimming hall in Maryland, and this was back in 2003, and we had a wonderful time. On our way home, I was keeping up with traffic. I was driving. I think I was doing around 85 miles per hour, so

was everybody else. It was very fast. A group of motorcycles went by us very quickly. We saw them for a little bit and then they sort of zoomed ahead of us and they were all, like, Kawasaki-type of motorcycles, which I guess some people call crotch rockets. One person stayed back. It turns out this was a man. This one person stayed back and he slowed down a tiny bit - he was in the lane to the left of us - and then he sped up very quickly. So he was now back ahead of us again. I remember glancing down at my speed and I was like, wow, I'm doing, like 80-85 here. So he's going faster than I am.

Then, all of a sudden, he tried to stand on his seat. We were a little bit behind him at this point but he stood on his seat, wobbled, and basically fell off right in front of us. He just did a, I guess, like a somersault type– it's almost like a somersault to the very side of the highway. I immediately pulled over. I did not see what happened to his bike. I parked and I ran over to him. He was sitting up with his legs in front of him. As he was sort of collapsing down, he landed in my lap because I went to help him - like, put my arms behind his back and he just ended up lying in my lap. It was really very emotional. He was injured. He had road rash all over him and his foot was basically off of his leg.

I am a teacher and I was a teacher at the time. I'm still a teacher. I can generally stay calm in the moment of a crisis and I just spoke very calmly to him. I opened his visor. I told him that he was going to be okay and we were going to get him some help. It looked like he had a lot of road rash and it looked like he had a leg injury but he was going to be okay. I did not tell him that his foot was hanging off of his leg. People started pulling over. People called 911.

In this particular part of the story - I actually had to check in with my husband to make sure that I saw it and he saw it - an EMT came to the scene. I guess EMTs have to stop at any accident scene. He came running over with a knife, which I believe he was going to use to sort of cut the jeans off of the person that had fallen - he was only wearing jeans, sneakers, a T-shirt, and a helmet - but instead, he stabbed him. He didn't stab him like the knife went all the way in or anything like that, but everybody who was at the scene, including the man in my lap, jumped. Then, he was like, “Sorry.” And he was much slower after that.

All of his friends had come back. He had asked one of his friends to find the bike and take off whatever was on the bike, I guess. I don't know what was on the bike. It could have been his wallet. It could have been anything. We can't ride motorcycles while holding things in our hands. Then, a helicopter landed in front of us and emergency people came over and they switched places with me. I just moved out of the way and let them do their thing. They loaded him into the helicopter eventually and they left.

I did give my name and number to one of his friends, but I never heard anything back. An interesting part about the story was I was in the car and the cops wanted to talk to me. My first instinct was actually to lie for him and I think it was because he was just so injured and I didn't think anything beyond that. I just had a very injured young person in my lap who I don't know if he could survive that type of injury - I had no idea - and it wasn't like some sort of clean break. It was really quite bad. So I lied and the cop knew. He said, “Okay, I get it, but this is what I'm going to say to you and then I'm going to give you some time to think about it. His motorcycle continued riderless down the highway, crossed over the highway, and went into the woods. And anybody could have hit that riderless motorcycle, a person in a minivan, a person with kids, just any person and could have been Killed through nothing that they did of their own accord.” And then he left and I was like, “Crap.”

When he came back, I immediately told him that he had been standing on his motorcycle seat, which he absolutely should not have been doing. Then, we went home and I never heard anything. I have no idea what happened. I can't even remember the highway we were on. We didn't typically go anywhere in Maryland. We lived in Northern Virginia at the time. It was just this cool place we went swimming to for the day. But for a while, both now my husband and I really struggled when we saw people on motorcycles. We both said that we just had incredible fear of that person, no matter who it was, going to fall off right in front of us and that still happens. I still tense up, but nothing like it was maybe the first couple of years after. It just has always stuck with us because it was such a crazy thing.

I actually do have my motorcycle license, which I had gotten not very long ago from when that happened. Once I passed my test without issue and then once I started trying to ride on the street, I was like, “No, this is not for me. There's just not enough protection for me. It doesn't outweigh the risk.” The enjoyment did not outweigh the risk, but I know that it's wonderful for many people.