



1072: The Year That Almost Broke Me
(& Surprise Baby #7) - Solo Episode

Child: Welcome to my mommy's podcast!

Katie: This episode is brought to you by Hiya Health, which I have a now extended and renewed interest in, especially with having a baby around who will be starting solid foods pretty soon. Because here's something that's kept me up at night as a parent, and I've talked about before. Our kids are the first generation growing up on not just ultra-processed foods, but foods that don't have the same nutrient content that they used to due to soil changes and so many other factors.

In fact, we're just beginning to understand the extent of this problem. And this is why Hiya exists and why I'm glad that they do, which is to give parents a real solution in a market that is flooded with kids' vitamins that are actually contributing to the ultra-processed foods. They have candy-like appeal, but not actual nutrition.

In fact, some children's vitamins on the market contain up to seven grams of sugar per serving and are stuffed with additives and petroleum-based dyes that I go to great lengths to avoid in my kids' diet. So Hiya took the opposite approach with zero sugar, zero gummy additives, just clean nutrition. And the great part is kids actually love them.

My younger kids are a huge fan. I have tried them, and the flavor is actually great, although obviously I don't take them daily. But what makes them different is how thoughtfully they are designed, formulated to meet very specific nutritional gaps that modern kids face. And they worked alongside pediatrician and nutrition specialists to make a chewable multivitamin that packs a blend of twelve organic fruits and vegetables and fills the common nutrient gaps that kids face.

They're also non-GMO, vegan, dairy-free, allergy-free, gelatin-free, nut-free. They really have thought of everything to make these ideal for kids. And they are NSF certified and receive Clean Label Project's Highest Purity Award. So when it comes to something I feel safe giving my kids, they are definitely on the list.

It's designed for kids two and up. They ship straight to your door. And I love that they send you a reusable bottle and stickers with your first order. So this helps you keep up with the refills, and they send refills every month as well. I am a big fan of these as well. And Hiya just launched something new.

If your kids are active and growing, you can add a clean protein powder with minerals designed just for kids to be exactly what they need. Their new Kids Daily Growth Plus Protein is a game-changer. It's more than a protein shake. It's a purity awarded clean protein powder with added minerals and healthy fats that can mix right into water or

smoothies and support muscle development and cognition and fuel everything else they've got going on.

So, we worked out a special deal with Hiya. You can receive 50% off your first order on any of their products. To claim this deal, you must go to hiyahealth.com/wellnessmama. This deal is not available on their regular website. So again, that's H-I-Y-A-H-E-A-L-T-H.com/wellnessmama, and get your kids the full body support they deserve.

This podcast is brought to you by BIOptimizers and their Magnesium Breakthrough product. Our bodies need seven different types of magnesium. Each one has its own unique purpose. One form helps muscles recover, another supports heart rhythm. A third supports the nervous system and so on.

Most supplements, even the high quality, expensive ones only contain one to two forms at best, and that's like trying to build a house with just a hammer and a screwdriver. You need the complete toolkit, and that's why I started taking Magnesium Breakthrough from BIOptimizers, which contains all seven forms.

No other magnesium supplement on the market offers this complete approach. I have looked, and BIOptimizers is so confident in their formula that they offer a full year, 365 day money back guarantee. So you can try it for up to a year and still get a refund if you're not happy. So if you wanna try this, go to bioptimizers.com/wellnessmama. And use the code WELLNESSMAMA for 15% off your order.

Plus, when you subscribe, you'll enjoy exclusive discounts, free gifts, and a guaranteed monthly supply. All natural ingredients, no synthetic additives or preservatives and always vegan, gluten-free, soy-free, and lactose-free.

Hello, and welcome to the Wellness Mama podcast. I'm Katie from wellnessmama.com, and in this episode that will be not at all about health and extremely personable and vulnerable, I'm going to share about the story of the toughest year of my life that almost broke me and that I really did not think I would survive a lot of days last year.

This is not the version that fits the caption. This is not the version that would be summed up in a birth announcement, certainly, and it's not the version that makes me look like the hero of the story by any means. That said, I am only sharing my perspective and experience, and I'm trying to avoid entirely sharing anybody else's experience, feelings, thoughts, actions, et cetera.

So I'm not-- I'm purposely, I'm admitting that this is just my side of the story, so take it as it is. This is the actual story, at least from my experience, because while there, it was and is a

beautiful baby at the end of this story, this story really is not about a baby, at least the story of last year. It is a story about the year that I feel broke me all the way.

A break that needed to happen, and I am finding gratitude for it. I'm still integrating it certainly, but oh, was it rough last year. A year that took everything I thought about, I knew about myself, and shook it up and held it up to the light. A year that gave me, in the end, more than I knew I could ask for.

But if I'm honest, it was really, really tough getting here, and there were many, many days that if I had had a way out, I would've taken it. Before I begin, I want to say thank you also, because the responses from all of you guys have been absolutely incredible. It's been one of the most beautiful things I've ever experienced, all the messages and prayers and kindness.

I know I didn't share this story at all when I was going through it. It was one of the times in my life where it was too raw and too vulnerable to share it as I was experiencing it. And even now, I'm only sharing parts of it, and I'm gonna share it the best I'm able, and as vulnerably as I know how.

But it will... This will be much different than a lot of episodes. I have been overwhelmed by the support though from you guys and the generosity and, and the spirit of love in the questions that were asked. And I know the situation definitely brings up a lot of questions, and so I wanted, because these questions were so thoughtful and heartfelt, to answer them as best I could.

But like I said, I wanna be clear that this part is my story to tell. And while I'm telling it honestly, I am protecting the privacy and dignity of other people in the story. There are pieces of this story that belong to other people that I'm not gonna talk about. This is not their episode. This is mine.

I'm just sharing my perspective. So, just know that going in. And this story starts actually before even, I ever found out there was going to be a baby. This story starts at the very beginning of last year when I felt a peace that was so pervasive that I couldn't imagine ever not feeling at peace again, which I look back and laugh.

Famous last words. But I said what I thought was a simple prayer going into last year, that I would not recommend nor do I ever plan to pray again, but it was, "If there's anything in my life that does not come from a place of love and kindness, shake it up. And it turns out, at least so for me at the time, this felt like noble and spiritual.

And as it, what unfolded, as you'll find out, felt like what often happens if we pray for, for instance, patience or courage. We don't just magically get infused with patience. We get

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opportunities to learn patience, or we get opportunities to learn courage, or we get opportunities to learn relational dynamics when we, we, when we request those things.

And I didn't know that yet, and I didn't realize the depth of the request that I had just made. Because what I found out was that life, God, the universe was listening very closely. And when I made that prayer, I thought maybe a few habits would change. I thought maybe I would get, just I would find capacity to be more loving.

Maybe my priorities would change a little. Maybe things would shift out that no longer fit, or I would see some areas that I could still work on, and that I would have more access to love and feeling loving all the time. I did not expect my whole life to feel like it got put in a blender. And I didn't think that the very first thing that would be shaken would be me at my very core, which in hindsight, again, I'm learning to be very grateful for because there are so many parts of myself that I thought were maybe coming from a place of love, and they truly weren't.

And I don't know that I would ever have gotten to see those parts in the light that I did without having this very particular experience. And it's an experience I certainly would never have chosen. So in that sense, as everything does, it worked out perfectly. But man, did I not feel like that in the moment. And I-- also for context of this, before I found out I was pregnant last year, early in the year, I had an experience that I still struggle to put into words.

The best that I can explain it is that I felt m- or really that there just, there was oneness, peace, and unconditional love in a way that I had never experienced before. And it wasn't-- there was not even a me to experience it. It just love was, oneness was. It felt like the feeling of both being and loving every single particle of existence at the same time, and it was excruciatingly beautiful.

Time was not present there. It was absolutely amazing and absolutely excruciating at the same time. Time disappeared, sense of self disappeared. There was just love. And I felt in that moment that perhaps that state is where we come from and where we return to after we leave all of this. And it felt more peaceful than I could imagine.

And I will say, after that experience, I don't h-have yet a fear of physical death, just from that feeling of this is what comes next, but the interesting part was after that experience, I had certainty about two things that felt very opposite at the same time. The first was, the relationship that I was in that was kind of like....

Well, those details are not mine to explore. But I was very clear that I was not gonna continue in that relationship. And I also had a feeling that I might be a mom or that I was

gonna be a mom again in this life. And I will say this with the relationship stuff, I had already started to have feelings around relationships, and I had been ignoring those.

Pr-probably more on those in future episodes. I thought I had gotten really good with boundaries and using my words and I had not, long story short. So entirely from my experience of that, I had clarity that I was no longer supposed to be in that relationship, and that perhaps all these pieces related to myself being in relationships at all that I had been ignoring were things that now needed to be faced.

And then I had that really weird feeling, feeling from coming from feeling very done, that I was gonna be a mom again, and that one kind of... I was like, "Hmm, well, that's weird and definitely not true." Which now I look back, of course, and laugh. Neither one made logical sense. They especially didn't make sense together.

And before I even had time to really, like, process that or figure out what either of those meant, the relationship ended basically the next day. And then a few days later, in between podcast episodes, just on a hunch, I took a pregnancy test, just because I had a weird feeling. I totally expected it to be negative, and as I stared at that positive result, I had tidal waves of emotion that I had never felt the depths of before.

And I did as I have done many times in my life, I temporarily put on my happy face, returned to podcast, did my job, people pleased, did all the things expected of me, and blocked it out, and then afterwards called my two trusted, most trusted friends with an SOS, and they were the only people who knew that for quite some time.

And what unfolded in the months afterwards are, without question, the wildest and hardest things I've ever experienced, and in some ways, I'm very much still processing. In those first days, though I will admit I did not feel overjoyed or grateful or any of the things that you are typically supposed to feel when you find out that you are expecting.

I wish I could say I accepted it with gratitude and embraced the beauty of new life, and I absolutely did not. Instead, I pitched the most epic temper tantrum with God and the universe for months. It was actually like, in hindsight, I'm quite impressed with my stamina of this temper tantrum. I cocooned and I isolated myself from pretty much everyone who loved me except for my kids, and I wrestled with the angels for a sense of control in my life, feeling like every sense of control I had, had been taken, and that I was unwilling to change the situation in the ways that I could, which meant I had to face the situation, and I was very, very not happy about that.

And learning how to hold all of those things without forcing or even being able to change many of them became one of the toughest and defining lessons of last year. The context of

suffering actually became another, but more on that later. So from this point, what followed was the hardest year of my life without question.

In fact, it made all the other hard years look like child's play. It made every psychedelic I had ever done feel like a placebo. It had made every experience of physical pain, any of it feel like absolutely nothing. It rocked me to my core. And to be very vulnerable and honest, the only reason I am still here and recording this podcast today is that I had absolute certainty that if I checked out of the physical world, whatever these things were that I needed to kind of learn and face in those lessons, that they were coming with me and that they were gonna be repeated, that there wasn't really a way through it, and it was probably gonna be harder if I took the easy way out.

And I don't say that lightly because I have had hard seasons before, whether it was sexual assault or divorce or health challenges or business struggles or losing close friends and family. But this was different because, A, it was a problem I couldn't solve. At the time, I was going through it almost entirely alone 'cause I wasn't telling people yet. There was no spreadsheet protocol plan, no way to fix it.

No matter how much I logiced or thought or used my brain in any way I could think of, there was no getting out of the situation in the way I saw it. That was at least the language I had at the time. There was kind of like the only way through it was through it, but in a different way than I had ever gotten to experience before.

And really, it was a complete dismantling of all the places that I was still trying to control outcomes and maintain the illusion or cared what people think, thought even if I wasn't aware of it. And it turns out I was less willing to let go of that control than I thought, because going into this, I thought I was, like, pretty zen and I was, like, pretty, you know, aware and enlightened and all those things.

And this definitely showed me that I was not even in kindergarten yet. And I got to face some things that felt very uncomfortable for a long time. Every place where I still did deeply care what people thought, every place where I was still seeking approval or worried what people were gonna say, or every place where I was trying to keep everyone else comfortable, this touched all of it.

That prayer for if it doesn't come from a place of love, shake it up. This touched every single place, my relationship with my kids, my relationship with my parents, friendships, relationships with past partners, my identity, my future, my image of self, my inner landscape in a way that felt way too raw and vulnerable.

I really felt like nothing was left untouched, and I have some very intense journals from this time and even early on. I've often processed by walking. I went for a lot of w- very angry, very long walks during this time. And w- at one point in the spring of this year that I'm explaining. There was a really, really intense storm, like thundering so loud that the house was shaking, lightning so much that the sky looked like daylight almost.

And I'm relatively close to the beach, so I went to the beach in the middle of the night, parked illegally 'cause I just did not care. I also cared very little about anything this year during this, this phase that I was going through. Walked out into the water, so I was in waist-deep water in a crazy thunder and lightning storm, and just screamed at God like, "Let's go.

Is that all you've got?" And just like, I feel like I felt grief and rage and despair and things I had never let myself probably ever actually feel. I think I had felt like 10% of them and thought I was being like, "Ooh, look how evolved I'm being. I'm feeling my rage. I'm feeling my grief." I had not. And what poured through me in that year, there were moments where it, I felt like I was gonna break.

I didn't feel like I could hold it. It felt like sometimes that all of the cumulative rage and grief of women throughout time was just like passing through me at that time. And it felt unbearable, and it gave me so much empathy for anyone who has ever experienced those depths of grief and those depths of rage.

I think there's a beauty and a sacredness there, but it's an extremely, extremely difficult one to feel, and I got so much empathy for every woman who has ever faced a pregnancy, under hard situations. I know there's, that's been so many throughout all of history. For women who have lost a child, who have been forced to have a child, for women who've gone through hard experiences just in the process of having a child or raising a child.

Just I felt so much. And women who have... I got so much more empathy for women who have faced the decision of not having a child, and that was empathy that I logically had felt or understood before, but I had not emotionally felt. And I now feel only love for women who have gone through any of those experiences, because yes, there's a beauty in the pain, and also it's so excruciating.

And what, one of the strangest things that stood out about this season is that unless you knew me really well, because I am so good at cocooning and isolating, for the most part, my life from the outside looked somewhat normal. Internally, I felt like I was walking through a wilderness. I remember reading books as a kid of saints, I grew up Catholic, and reading about dark nights of the soul and feeling totally alone and isolated and like it would never...

there would never be light again. And I remember thinking like, "I mean, that sounds kinda hard, but how bad could that actually be?" And I don't even think I have touched the depths of probably what a dark night of the soul can actually be. But the part that I did touch, I now realize, like, the-- I understand those people were trying to put into words something that is beyond words in how it feels.

And again, while I am now grateful for it, it took me a very long time to get to that point. And in the meantime, there were so many days I didn't think I was gonna make it through. There were days where the weight of it felt impossible. There were days where I questioned literally everything. There, there were days when I wondered if I would ever feel peace or okay or just not in turmoil again.

And if you've ever been there, please ever reach out to me if you need it. I see you. I hear you. There are a couple people who were very, like, safe, non-judgmental lifelines, and those people truly saved my life last year. So if you've ever been in that place, there are resources, and truly you can reach out to me on Instagram or wherever if you've ever felt that.

At the very least, I will send you love because I, I see you and that experience is so hard. And then there came a point in the pregnancy as well when realizing I seemingly couldn't run away from this darkness that felt so pervasive. I did as I typically often do of like, "Well, maybe I'll just face it.

I'll go 100% into it more." So I found myself a darkness retreat, a literal darkness cave, which it felt very appropriate and mirrored what I faced internally, and I thought, "If I can't run away from this, maybe I can just face it head on and get through it." I wrote all of my kids letters in case I never saw them again, because that was very much on the table at this point.

And I went into the darkness for four days without food, without a phone, without music or writing or light or anything that brought comfort or dopamine. For the record, of course, none of those things are recommended when pregn-pregnant. Having gone through them, I would not actually ever recommend a darkness retreat.

It's never a thing I would tell someone they, quote, "should do." it was very difficult. I think if it calls to you, it can be very helpful, but I would never, never presuppose to tell someone they should do that. But then again, so while those things were not recommended during pregnancy, neither is, like, complete rage, at all times, and so I was kind of weighing my options at that point and hoping to at least get through some of this rage before the baby was born and hoping I wasn't, like, destroying his nervous system the whole time.

But I certainly wasn't looking for enlightenment in that cave. I wasn't looking for a mystical experience. I was honestly hoping for even just the tiniest bit of relief from the darkness and from the turmoil. I hadn't announced the pregnancy yet at that point, even to my kids. So only, like, the couple close friends who were my lifelines at that point even knew.

And the darkness retreat was so interesting. I wish I could say it resolved things, in those four days. It didn't. But in hindsight, some of the things in it were so helpful. So I was so tired going into it from all of this and just from almost 20 years of being a mom, and I had always joked if I ever got to do a darkness retreat, I think I would just sleep the whole time and think it was awesome.

So I kind of expected that's what I was gonna do, is just, like, finally catch up on 19 years of lost sleep. And instead, I slept, and then I woke up, and then I realized I have no idea how long I have slept, if it's been a few hours, if it's been a day and a half, if I'm almost done, if I have still days and days left.

And there was a way to get out if I ever needed to. So in a sense, that made it even tougher 'cause I had to continually keep choosing to be in there. But I couldn't even see my hand in front of my face. I had to, like, feel around to get to the bathroom. There was just a bathroom and a cot. And then I got to start facing things like at first all the thoughts that came up and the thought loops I had been in for months, and then some of the emotions that were below that, some of the ones I was aware of, some of the ones I was not aware of.

The control one was still a huge theme here. And then toward the end, that I didn't know at the time was the end 'cause I had no concept of time, I started to feel a little bit of space between my thoughts, and I understood a little bit that concept of what m- people mean when they say space between the thoughts.

And I came out of that cave, and I did sob from the beauty of the world and from seeing the sunshine. I typically love the sunlight, and so that I sobbed from the dopamine, honestly, of seeing the sunlight. But when I came back, many... most of the emotions were still there, and I still needed to tell my kids, and I still needed to tell my parents, and there was a whole lot to still face.

And it, it felt like for a long time in the middle of this, I would have days where I wondered if things were starting to feel better, and then it was like more things would just surface and be felt. And I went back and forth on so many things. I debated so many decisions. Truly, it feels like a miracle that the baby and I both survived last year.

If I'm being very, very, very honest, I could not fathom how I would ever feel okay again. I knew that this was going to impact my kids, and I couldn't shield them from that pain, and

that broke my heart. And this went on for months, and I had to still one day tell my kids, and I had to still one day tell other people.

And there was so many things and lessons that are not mine to tell that go along with all of that and that continue to unfold. And some of those days were incredibly, incredibly difficult. And I wish I could also just say that, like, things sort of magically got easier. That wasn't what happened.

But what did happen one day, and I don't know that I'll be able to accurately put this into words, but I had heard things that did feel helpful at times about how our capacity to feel joy, for instance, is only expanded by our capacity to feel the depths of the emotions we would often label as negative or different things like that.

And I had heard things about suffering, and I'd heard the Buddha quote that, "Though I be in heaven or hell, I do not suffer." And that didn't really make sense to me. But I got to feel a little bit of what that felt like. There was a day when I realized somehow emotionally, this isn't a thing that I logically realized, but I felt the understanding that though painful experiences happen and challenges happen and pain may be inevitable, that my suffering, at least in that moment, I'm not saying this is universal, but for me, my suffering was coming from my own unwillingness to be with what was, to be with the actual experience of what was, of basically not accepting, of resistance.

And in that moment, there was a sense of relief for a second when I realized that the darkness that I had been feeling and the light were not separate. That like things that I had read in all those spiritual books of o- over the years felt, they fell into place more. They made a little bit more sense that those were on a continuum, the yin and the yang, that they were not separate and different, but part of the beauty of the human experience.

And in that moment, the suffering started to lessen a little bit. It didn't all go away immediately overnight. I honestly still occasionally get waves of it, though compared to what it was last year, it's so, so bearable and actually, like, I have gratitude for the parts I get to feel now. And I wish I could give a blueprint for what got me to that point where I had that moment of understanding that the suffering was coming from my own resistance and that I a- had the ability to let go of that resistance, but I don't know how I got there.

I'm just so grateful I did.

And one of the most humbling and beautiful parts of that year was realizing that at almost 40, I still have so much to learn. And while I've gotten to walk a beautiful role that involves some teaching in my life, that I feel like I'm also still barely a preschooler in the school of life, and there's still so much to learn.

I think I secretly thought I had done, already done the hard work up until that point. I thought I had healed. I thought I had grown. I thought I had figured it out and learned the lessons, and then life responded, and I got the very clear understanding that we're not done yet. There's still a lot to learn, and I'm not under any illusions that I've learned it all now.

There might still be infinitely more layers, and strangely, that kind of feels like a gift now. So the irony is that this was without question, emotionally the hardest year of my life. And physically, it was my easiest pregnancy by far, which still amazes me.

And I wish I could give you certain reasons for that as well. It certainly wasn't 'cause I, like, was perfect about taking prenats or I did the tea or the dates. I did a little bit of those at the end. I did get sunlight the whole time. That was the only thing that, like, helped at all. So I did get a lot of sunlight.

But I think it speaks to perhaps all the physical healing I've gotten to do for the last decade, probably having a lot more fat-soluble vitamin stores, having my minerals in good range going into it, having a good circadian alignment. Even in the midst of that complete emotional upheaval, I felt relatively great, had almost no morning sickness felt energetic, and physically felt awesome the whole pregnancy.

So for anybody else who's approaching 40, especially anyone who wants to get pregnant, I feel it's important to say that your body is probably more capable than you believe. We don't have to accept the story that age makes pregnancy worse or that we can't, can't get pregnant. I still find it so funny after 35 we're a geriatric pregnancy.

But my extreme geriatric, extreme multipara pregnancy was my easiest by far and my easiest birth, which that'll be a different episode and a different story. But honestly, the birth wasn't the miracle this time. It was beautiful. It was incredible. I'm so grateful for it. The miracle to me was surviving and the person I got to become by the time it happened.

The miracle was really that surrender, that understanding about suffering, the getting to face those things that felt unsurvivable that I had been ignoring my whole life, getting to feel those depths of rage and grief and all of the other emotions that I had never experienced, and to get so much more empathy for other people who have experienced those things as well or who still are experiencing them.

The peace that came with it eventually, the trust, the willingness to let go of control finally maybe for the first time in my life and to stop fighting reality, the willingness to actually love what is. And it turns out those were gonna be vital lessons for navigating things that I'm going through currently.

There are still many parts I still can't and won't share out of respect for people I love. I'm still processing the surrender part, and I'm really glad that lesson's on board for some of the things I'm getting to navigate right now. People have asked, or actually people have often assumed that I'm with the baby's father because there's a baby.

I am not. I can answer that with complete peace. I still have peace in that, that I am not meant to be in that relationship. I think we will be able to navigate co-parenting amicably. I'm hopeful that we actually both have the baby's best interest at heart and will maintain that. People oft- also ask about questions about am I single?

Am I open to other relationships? Right now, I, I have learned the hard way in life to never say never, so I'm not gonna use that word. I will say I feel very complete with having had relationships in this lifetime. I currently feel zero desire to ever be in a relationship again. I don't have any desire to add a step-parent dynamic to my kids' lives, especially while they're still growing up.

And so I currently have zero plans to put any of my relationships with my kids, in jeopardy for the sake of a relationship with a person I haven't even met yet. And so the short answer is no, I'm not open to relationships in this phase. As Kelly Brogan put this beautifully, I feel like I'm choosing motherhood, perhaps in a better way than I've ever actually chosen it in my life. And there's still some healing to do.

I, I'm aware of that in this area. I'm not fully integrated and healed with my feelings toward relationships. But currently, relationships don't feel worth it to me based on my experiences, and I just don't see the value in them. I don't say that as a judgment of people or of men. I am also grateful to have seen in my life and have so many examples, including certainly my dad, of amazing men who are beautiful examples of men and who show up in relationships, and my parents' relationship is a beautiful example of that as well.

Many parts of this story even last year were in navigating, deviating from kind of the script that is expected, whether it, whatever it be. There are many examples of that. I'll leave it at that. And so part of this for me right now in choosing my own path is saying no to relationships. I'm very aware of the idea in Anthony DeMello's book, "Awareness," that I love, that anything we renounce, we become forever tied to, so I'm not in any way trying to say never or to renounce relationships.

I'm just acknowledging that right now my kids are my priority. I don't see anything that will be gained for them in adding a relationship to my life. While I know that there are some beautiful examples of step-parents, I've also heard some really, really tough stories, and I just don't feel like I personally want to make that decision or bring that dynamic into my kids' lives.

So yeah, no, no relationships for me for the foreseeable future. There's also something profoundly healing about discovering that your life can already be full and that I can feel complete internally and that nothing feels missing without a romantic relationship or another person. I think that was a thing I had earlier in my life.

I was searching for the, like, missing piece or someone to, like, complete that piece or to make me feel loved. And I think part of facing the darkness of last year, let-- gave me some huge, tremendous gifts. One being there is a tremendous amount of freedom when you really actually let go of caring what people think.

And I thought I had done that, and I had not. And maybe I'll get to face that lesson more in the future. But there is tremendous freedom in letting go even to the degree that I have in caring what people think. And in that too, and really facing the parts of myself that maybe I was scared to face or had never even looked at before. There's a beauty in not feeling incomplete without someone else, not really even desiring another person in a romantic capacity and realizing just the absolute depth of beauty I have in my life with my now seven kids.

And I know every parent feels this way, and I love that. I hope that every parent feels so much joy in getting to be the parent of their children, and I certainly do. I feel like I got seven of the most amazing humans that I've ever gotten to meet, and I don't feel like anything's missing to get to spend just my time with them, at least for the remainder of their childhood.

And the truth is I've also completely changed my definition of alone. I was already relatively at peace with alone before, but even more so now because a year ago alone meant on my own or unsupported, and now it means something entirely different because so much for me reframed with family, with friends, with community, with especially my kids, with purpose, with freedom, with love.

And perhaps more importantly I feel like I have more parts of myself than I did before that year of darkness. So even when I'm alone, I don't feel the least bit lonely. And also I'm almost never physically alone with this many kids. People also ask if I have regrets, and I wish I could say I don't.

And I wish I could say that like I have integrated every lesson and I regret nothing and I feel wonderful and at peace. And some days that's true. And there are days where I still do regret things and might change things if I had the chance. And there are days where I'm really, really grateful for the beauty of what is right now.

And I have a feeling that that is just a piece that's gonna continue to integrate. When I look back, I realize that that prayer, shake up everything that doesn't come from a place of love, was answered. And it wasn't, it shook up everything that wasn't from a place of love. And much like when I don't know what movie it's from, but there's a Morgan Freeman scene in the movie where he's explaining to this woman and he's like, "When people pray for patience, you think they just get patience?"

No, they get opportunities to learn patience. And when people pray for courage, they don't just get courage, they get opportunities to have courage. And when they pray for like family harmony or whatever it is, they don't just get good feelings, they get chances to grow together as a family." And that's what I felt like last year was.

It's also got me to a point where I'm like, I'm done with words for the year. I'm done with praying for any of the things that have names like that. I'm like, you know what? I ask for nothing. I am good. I'm at peace now. I don't request any more patience or courage or any shaking up of anything. But last year, completely, perfectly painfully, everything that wasn't rooted in love for me felt like it got shaken, everything.

And what remains feels more free and more solid and at peace than what I had felt before through force. I realized all the places I was still controlling life. There's still more to realize. And these days my life is much smaller in the best way possible. There was a ruthless simplification and I'm really grateful for that. I'm home most of the time.

I'm present much more of the time. My favorite place to be is with my kids. My favorite moments are when they're all just in the kitchen for some reason and laughing and joking, and maybe one of them is like punching or like play punching or kicking the other one, or they're tossing a ball. Whatever it is, like those moments are the ones that matter to me now.

A conversation with them, the, the baby laughing for the first time, sunrise, one family dinner together or gardening. It's beautiful to be in a place where I'm saying no to travel. I'm saying no to new obligations. I'm saying no to business growth. I'm not in a place where I feel the need to compulsively grow things anymore.

I have, maybe for the first time, complete trust that it will work out perfectly, that things will be taken care of. I'm learning how to self-source some of those feelings, and as Kelly Brogan says, kind of like self-husband, realize that the feminine doesn't naturally create structure, and protecting and providing is the realm of men.

So since I'm not choosing to have a partner, how can I just create structure that feels a little bit safer and really prioritize the home environment with my kids, spending time in the

garden and make their moments of childhood that are still left feel hopefully very memorable? And I share all of that really just to tell the story and only from my perspective, without sharing what anyone else might have said or felt at that time.

I know that everybody else who is involved with this had, of course, their own emotional experiences. I'm only sharing mine on purpose, and I don't share that to take away from the fact that I'm sure this was very difficult for many other people as well, and I'm so grateful for the other people who showed up for me in my hardest moments, despite the fact that it was difficult for them, too.

I'm so grateful for my other kids who have been so amazing with their new little brother. And I don't have anything to teach. There's no lesson from this. There's no e-book. There's no wise wisdom that I can impart to you. I'm certainly not the hero of this story. I just learned a lot. I survived, and I am grateful for my new little one and for all of my kids.

Those are my biggest joys in life right now. And I guess to wrap up, all I would say is if you are listening to this and you are in a hard season of any kind, or you're in a phase where everything feels like it's falling apart, or if you're in the darkness and you can't even fathom that there's another side to this, I wanna tell you what I wish someone had told me, which ironically, I wouldn't have listened to anyway at the time.

But maybe these words would help on the other side. Don't judge your story by the middle. Don't judge forever by how you feel in this moment. Don't assume that the breaking is the end of everything. Don't assume that the falling apart means that you've failed. Sometimes life dismantles everything that's not love, so that what's built can be built from a place of love.

And sometimes the thing that you are most terrified of becomes the doorway to the life that you couldn't have imagined without it. I wouldn't have believed myself, when-- if I had had someone tell me that when I was in it. Like I said, I'm grateful for the people who showed up without judgment and just with hugs and got me through it.

And for right now also, I'm just holding the beautiful evidence of that there can be beauty on the other side of that in my arms most of the day, not at this exact moment. But I am so grateful. I am now so grateful for the baby. I'm so grateful for that hard year. I'm grateful for that hard lesson, all the lessons.

I'm really grateful for every person who stayed in my life through that. I'm also grateful for every person who left because that's perfect too for all of it, for the parts I would not have chosen. Maybe especially for the parts that I would not have chosen because somehow they led to here, and here is perfect, and there's still maybe much more to come.

And so to anyone who's been involved in this story, even if it was just energetically, even just sending love and thoughts as so many of you have, and especially to those in my daily life who were here through it all I'm so grateful. And I feel like only the words of the Hawaiian prayer, I forget the name, feel fitting here, which are: I'm sorry, please forgive me, thank you, and I love you.