

Mothxrhood - Talk 2

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02:05

Hi everyone, and welcome. My name is Kajsa. I am one of the motherhood producers, together with half the Harding, and Taylor rich. I am so excited to welcome you all to today's panel talk motherhood and to masseur festival. I am shortly going to hand over to our wonderful host Shelly Maxwell, after I just go over some quick housekeeping. So, as a part of the future innovators of East London dance program, or the field for sure which myself and the cohort of 2020 have worked incredibly hard to bring you master festival. So method is running events all week long. And if you want to get involved in more events. Tickets are still available to buy all this week by heading to Eventbrite. You can also head to our social media Instagram handle is the field. And you can follow the ticket link from there. I would also like to say a big thank you to our partners represent creative one dance UK. And the next choreography Festival, which is a part of shiwen Davis jobs as many other festivals and events, and Massa have also had to relocate to a virtual place. So we just really want to see a big big thank you for joining us on screen today. And as we all know, by this point, technologic technology can be quite temperamental, so if there are any technical technical difficulties. We kindly ask you to bear with us as we try and start it out. I want to introduce you to our two wonderful BSL interpreters, that are joining today's talk, Sophie and Bridget. If you are experiencing any accessibility issues or any technical issues. Please send Mr Festival, which are the hosts of this webinar.

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And we'll do our very best to help you.

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Finally, there will be a q&a at the end of this talk, so do feel free to post your question in the box that says, Ask a question, throughout the talk. And without further ado, I'm very excited to introduce you to Shelly Maxwell, and the motherhood panel to gauge and grace. Okay.

04:41

Hi, guys.

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Thank you so much closer. Um, so I'll kick us off just by doing a short introduction to myself, and the two panelists, welcome everyone to this panel on motherhood My name is Shelley Maxwell, and I am a movement director choreographer, writer and co director of a new production company called benue

creative house. In addition, of course, to being a mother to a six year old girl. I have the pleasure of welcoming today. Grace okera Kay, and I'm just going to do a little short snippet grace, about you. So Grace has been in the dance sector for 18 years, delivering on a wide range of activities, spanning across performance productions touring fundraising and strategic development. She runs her own company, uprising rebel that supports black female choreographers and administrators, as well as developing inclusive audiences. Grace produces work that is artistically ambitious culturally enriched and wrapped in social and political context. She is the mother to a four year old boy named Harris, welcome grace.

06:01

Thank you. Thank you very much.

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Our next panelist is a Thea guyot Thea is an actress writer and director born and raised in South London. Her first short film Run was bfi post rooms pick of the month, shorts of the week and won the new talent award at the bfi future Film Fest. It also earned her a Sundance ignite fellowship with film London she created the short film, Eli on their London calling 2018 slate, and also a commissioned short for stormzy. She's currently developing her feature films surviving earth with the bfi and his mother to an 11 month old boy Nova, who is currently sharing the screen with her Good morning, and welcome Nova,

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your morning thank you.

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Um, so, to kick us off both. I thought it's interesting that something that has been posed or used generally in the past has been this idea of career versus motherhood, and that usage of the word versus in the middle. They used to be seen as oppositional and not complimentary. And I think my question really is. What about if they are interchangeable so versus career versus motherhood, why not motherhood versus career and grace when we spoke a few weeks back, you spoke about taking a year off to spend with Harris. And you mentioned that you didn't want to go back to work. Can you speak a little bit about that. And about that kind of experience.

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Yeah. Um,

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I think first of all to your first point the kind of the versus, you know, motherhood versus Korea, I think that, in one sense, I, I've always known I wanted to be a mother, or I assumed that would be a mother I'd wanted it and assumed that it would happen. And luckily it did happen and I, I thought about. I didn't think about it deeply but I knew that I wanted to shape my career, my working career around that premise so for example I used to work in organizations so in offices, a lot and I and that that whole set up. I knew was never going to work for me personally but also, you know, being a mother having to, you know, drop offs and then pick ups and things like that and then you can't do anything in between,

you have to be at work there's no flexibility if they're six or so forth. So I knew quite a few years ago that I was going to work from home and be freelance. And so that is what I ended up doing and I did that just a couple and I did that and then I think a year and a half, no two years later I became a mother. So I was slightly prepared for that in a random type of way. And, and

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I like the time off.

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That's the simple answer because, because there are challenges when you're freelance, you don't have maternity leave you while you get, obviously the government maternity leave, what's not much money you don't have that comfort of knowing you're going back to something. And, And I was very much aware of that, and I didn't want to go back to anything. I wanted to stop what I was doing, enjoy my child, enjoy my life at that moment in time because that you know they do say, and I was very much aware that you won't get those moments back and they're only so small for a short period of time and it's so true. And so therefore, I just liked it, I didn't like the stress, I wasn't trying to talk to anybody. I was like, you know, I had a friend who was keeping me in with the gossip, and that was all I needed, and I was like who's leaving where and what they do and oh okay interesting thank you for that, you know, so I was kind of like knowing a little bit what's going on but that was all I needed and I just enjoyed having that time off. And I think that is also partly to do with the industry and how you work and it's just so full on all of the time so that was great and then going back. So now we're back to me, choosing to be freelance, not having anything that was secure to go back to. And also, not feeling like I was ready I wanted another year I like if I could have another year off and just, just be with my child. Bring me or pull myself together that will be fantastic. And so when I did go, you know, but I could not afford that. So when I'm looking, when I was looking to go back, I said to myself I just don't want to go back into producing. And I think I remember we've had this conversation but that will be quite a while ago, I don't know if you remember I said I was looking at everything else. I was, I was trying to go into a new field, which was crazy. You know, first of all, you've, you just had a child you're coming back. Now you're trying to change your career path and I was looking at fundraising for the charity sector. You know, I was like, I've had some success with Arts Council applications that could be a fundraiser, you know, no actual background in fundraising, or development in that way. But I you know I still persevered I got some interviews like I moved forward in a sense, but, um, yeah, I didn't want to come back because it was just, it's just really difficult.

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And I felt

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that again. Nobody's obviously agreeing with you and that's

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where I'm coming. That's really odd. Then also no you're not paid as well. So there's the worry about income, I can get it. And then for the, for the first year, the income, basically covered the cost of childcare, which is quite sad because you know there are other bills as well. But, yeah, so that was it.

That was my struggle reason I didn't want to come back because it was just I knew how difficult, you throw yourself into your work, because there's no choice. As a producer at that point in my career, I was the project manager was the fundraiser. I managed to avoid marketing, but you know, administrator was quite a lot of role so it was, it was that but I did come back I did come back,

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you've encapsulated so many points of grace, just in that response that you've done because we you know we speak about circumstances, and I like the word choices because we have to remember that our life is dictated by the choices that we choose but sometimes the choices that we make are dictated by circumstance. So you know, whether you're a single parent, or if you have, you know, worried about salary earnings, your socio economic standing and your own personal ambitions and desires for your career everything kind of informs the decisions and your choices that you're going to make, in addition to being mother to a little person so it's never easy I feel for anyone Thea you are currently in your first year. You're on the brink of finishing this year that grace just spoke about for herself. And I think even going back before I you know novar coming into the world, going back to being pregnant and to having to deal with pregnancy, while you're juggling your career Can you speak a little bit on, as we said, whether it's a career versus motherhood motherhood versus career or blowing that all up and just trying to balance everything.

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And, yeah, I think I kind of. When I thought about having a baby and when I was pregnant, I always kind of took this approach where I thought I'm gonna just do both I'm gonna bring him wherever I can when he's born, and just, just do it like really fiercely and not really care about. If people felt a certain way about it in certain spaces, because I always kind of felt like it should be there should be more space for it. And it should be more accessible for mothers in the creative industries, to be able to bring their young children to certain meetings and obviously every it's not, it's not convenient everywhere but just at least for something. And I think, and obviously being pregnant, it didn't really, it didn't, that didn't really change for me being pregnant because I could still go wherever I wanted and even some auditions I had they knew I was pregnant and I was fixed they wanted me to audition, which was really nice. And I was in a BBC free show called enterprise, and they actually wrote my pregnancy into the show, so that I could stay in, stay in the series, which was really really great so I was seven months pregnant when I filmed the that series. So, that was all very doable for me during pregnancy. And then I guess, um, once he was born, he was born in November, so we had a few months before lockdown started. So, Yeah, I was bringing him to script meetings and like breast feeding him onto the table and stuff like that, where I could so I kind of just, I guess I kind of balance both immediately because I had to, and I still had. Thank you. Thank you for clapping for me.

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And I still had,

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I had like a script deadline. The following January of this January, after he was born so I couldn't really stop working in that sense.

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Even though I didn't really want to. I couldn't.

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So yeah, I kind of just had to balance straightaway. Yeah.

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And it is that kind of, um, juggling act i mean i hate to bring in that kind of stereotypical saying, but it does feel that way sometimes because for me as well I had to find that balance of bringing her with me to teach. Yeah, or you know, if I could take her with me into rehearsal spaces and not all spaces are kind of malleable to that yeah yeah and therefore it comes as gray said to childcare which is not inexpensive at all if you don't have a support system. And you know, is the industry really set up to support us mothers with regards to child care because many institutions are not on our system in the States, they have crushes and crushes set up in the theatre industry as well. Um, but, Grace. I was reading up on on a website called dance Mama, and for those who've never heard of dance mama before it's a good resource it's actually a resource about mothers in the dance industry. And in the interview. You stated that the biggest thing that changed when I returned back to work was me, my life and responsibilities had grown and priorities revolved around that. I didn't tolerate things that I felt were not a value to my progression or finances or took me away from my child without good reason. I can't say I have the perfect balance as there's a juxtaposition of needing to provide an income, but it is a present. The mantra, that's been me, and I can see that you're nodding as well. Yeah.

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What resonated with you feel and what

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I think the point about, like, I'm not. I'm, I've got the word left me but about not compromising sorry not compromising on like the work you want to do, and the paycheck and things like that and I think, yeah, things that take you away unnecessarily from your baby. And those really resonated with me because yeah I think it just kind of it just puts that gives you that fire in that boost that you probably needed before you had a baby. To yes say no to more things and demand better pay or demand better opportunities and create, I guess a more tailored path for yourself. And I think yeah your baby kind of allows you to navigate that in a better way or the bank would be absolutely yeah

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race has this mantra then still guided you not quite sure how long ago that article was,

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yeah, I forgot about that. Thank you. That was last year maybe I don't even know what year we're in now, it feels like everything. I'm ago like that's how it feels. Now that was either last year and Lucy, who. who's mccrudden News mccrudden, she's, she and I used to work together at rhombic when I worked at Ron bear. Briefly, and that's her company dance Mama, and my man it's it's exactly I forgot about that and I did I write that look at me. But yeah, it's true. You, there's not time to waste them and we waste a lot of time in the past just doing things, I think, trying to get experience, and the wildlife

experience, and I've got bills to pay, and a child to, you know, bring up and so if I set my rate my daily rate and I don't drop it. And part of that daily rate as well and not compromising is simply because I can't afford to compromise childcare in the beginning, childcare could be up to like a grand a month. And it could be just under that like it was something like 800 or just something like that for three days a week, not even five days a week. So, there is no real way around that and you do become fiercer. I mean, I can't speak for everybody I have bad personality type anyway. But it was just allowed, I just was enough's enough, you know, my child is a priority and then sometimes when you're working a lot. I don't know if you're going to get to this you have that guilt. You have that guilt when you're just working so when you were talking about taking your child to meetings and taking your child into rehearsals. I basically stopped going to rehearsals. I don't put because I'm the producer. It's great to be there. I don't have to be there things still keep happening and I can see what what is going on if it's filmed. You know, things can be sent to me I can come in, I can breathe in and I can breathe out, you know, but in the old days I would sit in the corner in the studio and know what is going on and now I basically stopped doing that. However, I do work at my desk here. This is my front room, so I'm working at my desk and when you have a child. And you have to do like more administrative work. That is really challenging. You can't focus on something. Always and wait till it's asking for food and snacks and all of that. Yeah,

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I mean as soon as he sees the laptop he just wants to slap it. Yeah.

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victim in my son just.

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So, yeah, rock on with that. So yeah so basically it's really tricky to actually keep working but because of finances, you know, he only started going to nursery three days a week for the last year because we can only afford two days a week because it's extortionate. So, yeah, so basically no The matter is the same, it's like if I'm if it's not worth. My, my time it you know if it's not giving me any value in terms of professionally or financially, then I'm not doing it, and that's just that simple. I just have a good day with my son.

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No, I totally agree with you because for me. Um, I don't have any support system in London because I'm from the Caribbean. But I remember feeling completely ecstatic when Marley reached the age of the government was going to give me money to assist with child care because it opened up more working hours to me because now I could afford to take these jobs because it is a balancing act financially as well. But um, I just wanted to say a little quote it's a quote from Plato which says, our need will be the real creator. So your needs, will give you the impetus to then create based on that like mother is the tool of invention. And I want to think about that idea of pivoting so this term is being used a lot now, because of the covid 19 pandemic. And I just thought, can we talk about pivoting as a result of becoming a mother, because mothers have been pivoting for years for decades or centuries. So, Did either of you pivots once you fell pregnant or once your child was a certain age, professional creative creatively we've all already kind of started thinking about that grace with you, with regards to your

differences when you went back into the rehearsal space, and how you pivoted to make your life a little bit more amenable, but um Thea and grace I don't know if you have any kind of other things to add with regards to parenting. Because of motherhood.

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Um, I guess it's just it's just that constantly with everything. It feels like I'm just I think especially pivoting between like trying to find time for yourself and. And then, which I still have felt fell to do. Um, and then like, also I think at the moment I'm kind of struggling, like I'm stopping and starting kind of, I don't seem to have time. When I have something to do. I can only manage to do like say is the writing of the script, I don't really have a lot of time to do all the other stuff that comes with art, whether it's like doing in, in depth research about whatever whatever I'm working on or just spending some time browsing the internet for other like interviews and things, I used to watch and find inspirational. I kind of just have to get the job done. Now, which I find sad because a lot of what I love about my work is all the extraneous things as well, which informs what I create. I think I guess.

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Sorry. Yeah. I totally agree like I don't watch. Well first of all, I only started watching. I don't even watch TV anymore so that stopped, and I've only started watching Netflix in the past year, because there was just like, it was like after work. Eat cook. Like it was everything else. I needed to do that needed to get done. Nope. No, and I find like Netflix or YouTube just my chill time. I didn't have that for like a few years. I'm just reintroducing it. Now he's old enough to just sit over there and watch the iPad by yourself, or we'll sit next to each other. So I totally agree with that and I think that there's a constant pivot, I think, in life, mostly, especially, especially in our field we all pivot. So it's just a different look different. an additional element to add onto, onto what's going on in life, and constantly because I never signed up to it. Shay like you I, I, my family live around the world. And my husband is not British he's American so his family live over there so there is no real like oh can I just drop him off over, you know, and then come back over to you and I'll come back to it. We almost had to create that. But that took that took years to do you know, and so there's no support but I've never also felt that I've never subscribed to the fact that being a parent or a mother is like my goal. It's, it's, as my only kind of final goal in life and that one thing I want to focus on because I have got ambitions in my career. And one thing I don't know if it's pivoting but one thing that I had to keep thinking about is how to not stop with those ambitions and those desires and how to adapt them. A lot of the work that I've been trying to do and have been leading up to, is working internationally. How do you do that so for the first three years before school he's just started school this September. He will come. It wasn't easy. So my husband and he will come to some, not all of them but there were moments where we would have a year he's, he's very well traveled for four years. He's, he's confused, while a lot of European ones but you know he's been to Australia twice like come on, before. So, and that wasn't easy and we had to work it in financially to everything that was going on, but that was my way of trying to integrate him to to life. And I knew I had a very short into my working life I should say, and I knew there was a very short amount of time that will happen now he's in school I don't have that opportunity so I have to be quite careful about you know and considered about what I'm doing so, You know there is always this constant challenges and as the child grows, and the development is different. You get more opportunities to do stuff so it's not as difficult but then some other things become a little bit more difficult because you're restricted because of school. And you can only go out in the half times and then you have to make the decision

well how long can I be away in term time, and so on and so forth so yeah i think that it's, it's a constant negotiation.

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It is absolutely a constant negotiation I speak, I think about when you have to fill forms and now you know they they always ask you about dependence. And that yeah word, you have independent, and then you have dependence. And I think about the sense of identity and self, and the self that you were before pregnancy and motherhood and having that kind of independence in your own decision making. And then what having a dependent does to alter that the stakes are different. And he spoke about the feelings of guilt, Grace earlier. So for me I also took a year off of work to spend with my child. I was able to do that and I appreciated, one being able to do it because it's not an easy thing to do. But for me, at the end of the year I found myself needing to go back to work because, like the both of you I'm still looking at my career and my own goals and ambitions. And I had to come to terms with. I am still Shelly, and I still need to navigate, what that is in the world. And I remember having a conversation I can't say with my one year old but more at my one year old about the fact that I've given you these 12 months now and I've nurtured you and I've given you everything I possibly can for this year. I need you to allow me this time. And I think by doing that with her. I gave myself permission to go into the world and to, to not feel as guilty and it was hard because I still felt guilty. When I was in the rooms and the spaces. And I still would rush back you know to get her quickly from nursery and to carry her back home, but it was hard, but Thea I watched one of the short films on your website called yogurt shits. Yeah. And the main character says, nobody crushed my maternal dreams. They made me ride to the, to the delivery room on a unicorn. And when you're the main character said that I chuckled because, you know, the responsibility of society to offer a balanced view of the realities of motherhood. And many times it's skewed in the way that it doesn't show you the bad. It doesn't speak about the lows, it just kind of pushes this wonderful romanticized version of what being a mother is. And so I wonder if you could speak a little bit about the concept behind the film, and just some, you know, I guess your opinion on society's responsibility to offer a less biased view.

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Yeah, I guess, that, that whole kind of monologue came from. And I guess it kind of stemmed from my birth story so my birth ended up being complicated in the end. And I just wasn't like I don't know no one kind of prepared me for even though I'd read books and stuff, everything was obviously I understand why, you know, no one wants to fear monger, but for mothers and everything, but I just felt like everything I read was so positive that I just was not even expecting kind of anything to go wrong.

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Thank you.

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Um, even though obviously I knew it could, but I just, I guess, I don't know, you kind of have this thing that won't happen to me or whatever like I had that anyway. While I was pregnant. And then I just felt kind of blindsided by, I don't know care professionals like none of the. None of the classes I had gone to. They, they didn't really speak about the common things that happen so like I had a hemorrhage. And I lost a liter of blood on some more, but they didn't really, and then when I speak to people who are

midwives they say oh that happens a lot but no one really no one really said that to me they always only spoke about like the worst thing that could happen they don't speak about the common. The common things or if it's like

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a second degree tear, but they all they only always want to say like, Oh, you might have a little tab or it's common to have a first degree and do that but certain everything costs that, which is also common, they don't, they don't want to scare you about or just stuff like that. And then also just people speaking openly about birth stories. I found very rare. No one really, I just hadn't really heard any and I knew people who had had children, and they kind of. If something did happen they would just skim over it and obviously I didn't know any better before I had one so I wouldn't ask. I wouldn't go into more details about things, I guess, either to ask the question, and then also I guess it's the whole, like, image of motherhood on social media. I think it's getting a lot better now. And I do see a lot more. A lot of more balance in what people share. But there's also just this kind of fit to show your vulnerability I guess like even if something did happen that was, had a negative effect on the person they still, I don't know, it's like they're scared to show how much if it did sadden them or if it was a traumatic experience they still kind of brush it with like a smiley. Oh, but it's fine because now I've got my bundle of joy and it's like, it's okay to cry and it's okay to have feel all of these emotions. Um, and yeah I guess it just kind of off that gave birth, it just kind of shocked me, and I was like wait I've just been. Nobody told me any of this would happen. And then you start feeling like oh if you're sad, because I was I cried like every day for a week and then it's like, no, maybe I have postnatal depression, even though it's just normal. Even if you do have it or if you don't regardless. But, um, yeah, I guess that's my long winded.

36:02

No no no not long winded at all very realistic because it's about the, the highs and the lows because when I watched your yogurt shifts, that's what I thought of I was like, you know, the character is at a point where there are you know she's feeling low, and they're low moments but she's folding the baby's clothing, and that in itself that act is bringing some fulfillment and joy and then you speak about the highs and it's that kind of balance between both because I do have friends who have birth stories that they would utilize the word trauma to describe them. Because birth, can be traumatic. And even if the labor itself is not new somewhere traumatic after birth, you know, going through that you'd the energy of your body it is very physiological with regards to how you feel, now being a mother and being thrust into this, this new. And yeah, there isn't really a support system in place. I remember speaking with my husband's mother. And because I found it insane, that the day after I gave birth to my kid because I lost over pints of blood so I was okay, but I had to stay overnight. And then, you know, they're like yeah you're fine and as off on my merry way we had this tiny little person that we carried and we're supposed to be driving home, and we were just like, no one's gonna tell us anything like we literally drove, but I don't know maybe 15 or something, miles per hour. It was crazy. And, you know, she was just saying like back in the day for them sometimes they were allowed three days in and you'd have people coming and talking about breastfeeding and all of that and nowadays it's just like in and out and

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go Greg,

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I was in hospital for a week.

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I was in labor for.

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I went in on Sunday morning and he came choose day early morning. So, and I had an epidural. And, and for other reasons. I was there for a week, but I did cry by the Friday I was like I literally I couldn't, I couldn't hold it in and then the nurse said, this is really normal to feel emotional because I was just like so over everything. And with what you're talking about there about the birth. I had friends that I luckily I had a few friends that had just had children my year before actually at the same time, I lived in flats at that point, and my downstairs neighbor and I were seven weeks apart. She was first, and another friend that I shared with Shelly, we were like, a few months apart. And, um, no they don't tell you today, because they don't want to scare you, and everybody's birth is different and I.

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Yeah. So what. Yeah,

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I would have appreciated, to know like you I lost the lead so Lita. I was holding my child after birth. And I fainted. I remember my so did I. Yeah, it was. I had to call my husband's name to take the baby. And then I opened my eyes and then like all these doctors. And yeah,

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same thing. Yeah.

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And, and I didn't get told how bad I torn. The nerve for me when you go to take out your stitches she's like oh you lost a lot of blood. Oh, you've got me I just left the hospital no one wants to tell me how badly. And I find that it's more of a disservice. But I understand because the when you have your first pregnancy you're terrified about what childbirth is, but to be quite frank by the time. If you go through your fall I was a weekly I think if you go through your full term, you'll be out but you don't wait yeah and I just think it does do us a bit of a disservice. And it doesn't have to be everybody you know the all the details because everybody goes through it differently but just more realistic. As you said, like what is really common yet to bleed, you know to bleed out a lot to tear. You can't sit down and how you don't even want to look. And how am I gonna, how am I asked for the laxatives everybody that wants children. This is my thing. Oh, Oscar laxative because like scared, literally shitless.

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Luckily, I had

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to go on iron tablets, I don't know if you did, because of the blood loss, which obviously makes you constipated and then it's like, now I'm even more.

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Anything let it all just pour out.

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This is not the nicest thing to say but

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it is I mean it comes back to that idea of the body, you know, the body is so many things, because the body is political but the body is also scientific and our body is streaming with hormones we're going through all of these changes that you go through throughout the trimesters. And it also is the makeup of what's happening inside of you, and you know you're expected to continue living your day to day life.

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Normally,

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and then again after giving birth and, you know, let's also think about those people who have won multiple children but also those who have lost children, and the mothers who have given birth and not had the fortune of watching their little ones, grow up in this world, because they have gone through all of that experience that that we, fortunately have. But then, with that, on top of it. The idea of loss, you

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know, for a mother,

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moving forward. I am aware of time. And I'm just going to raise one more kind of question or point before we go into the q&a. So, for those who'd like to pop questions in the box, please feel free to do so now and we'll try to get through as many as we can before we finish. So I'm just going to reference, one more of your films, there. And that's your mother's absence. Mm hmm. So, could you tell us a little bit about the film. Because I wonder about our viewpoints on mothers on our mothers, and how our views have changed as a result of becoming mothers ourselves, But firstly on your film your mother's absence the if you don't mind.

42:56

Yeah. Um, so, I lost my dad in 2015, from an overdose, so it was like really sudden. And I, I think after that I just kind of had some kind of, like, what's it called, like maybe separation anxiety. Um, and I just kept thinking, I think because it was so random. I just kept thinking that something was going to happen to my mom, like all the time like literally randomly would be really unreasonable like images would pop into my head about things that might happen to her if I'm not in the house or if she was going out

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to bla bla bla.

43:40

So yeah, I decided to make this film, for those who haven't seen it, it's just about a young woman waiting for her mom to come home and the mom isn't answering the phone. And she, she knows she's gone to a certain area, and then her friend tells her there's been a crash in that same area. And so the person starts assuming that it was her mom who's been involved in this car accident. And so it's just her kind of going through the motions and waiting for her mom to come home, which she does. But, yeah, that's the, that's what the film is about and that's kind of what inspired it.

44:22

Yeah, because it made me wonder about and I call it micro anxieties, so you have everyone talks about anxiety in a very big way but what about the monk micro anxieties, especially during COVID in this time. And for me and grace because I sent my child. Rule. Um, it really is a worrisome, if I'm being honest at times, the decisions that we make that will impact their lives. And I just found myself thinking about my mother, and how much trouble and drama I put her through when I was younger, without realizing it. So, my view on motherhood has now been altered upon reflection. Yes, my own experiences. I don't know if you have anything to add on that grace.

45:14

Yeah, I think first of all with what you're saying. Yeah,

45:19

I

45:20

have had that I lost, I notice both parents, but there is always this kind of worry that I had at some point of anything going wrong, you know just just always worry and then when the July bombings unfolding from East London. Originally, of all this as one offer from bamboo up in East London, and my mother was out I was out got phone call from my brother and I'm like, Well, you know like, there were things that happened that make you worried, and almost as a when I had my son, I just remember thinking, I'm actually so scared but anything. You're scared, something's going to happen. You know, I would make sure when I went to bed I listened to his breathing. I didn't really sleep so I'm just making sure he was breathing, all the time because you worry about you know caught death and because they don't know why. Cut deaths happen. You're just like okay so I started to be extra cautious so I kind of relate to that but mine got transferred to my child. Um, and then it was your question about anxiety.

46:31

Well no, that was just my commentary on, on what Thea had said, with regards to, you know, as parents I feel that we have micro anxieties constantly.

46:42

Oh yeah. So yeah, that, that that's definitely, definitely. It's less a little bit less now but I'm constantly you know you walk on the street, he has to walk on a certain side because you know I'm constantly

worried about, you know, making sure you just want to keep them safe, and that's it and you just, you don't know how you know there are some ways that you know what to do but then when you do they go to school you're like okay but I don't know everybody that I don't know what's going yeah you know there's like, Yeah, when. So, Shelly Harris went to nursery at one, just like us and we kept picking like he was there for a day at the nursery. So we were picking up after four hours. I was like we're paying for a day and it's not cheap. And then we just like drop him off really late like 10 o'clock in the morning that's late because you know people are dropping off at eight. Some people at seven below eight nine o'clock 10 o'clock. And then, about three o'clock we're just like. Should we get him we should get him let's just get him. I missed it.

47:49

Again, it's all about that balance isn't it. So I'm gonna pull us into the q&a section now. So, we have a question I'm gonna read a quotation that the person has written the quote is from Sam Smithers who is the chief executive of the Fawcett Society. And it says quote, in my view, woman's workplace, equality, will have been set back decades, by this crisis, the corona virus pandemic. Unless government intervenes to

48:21

avert it.

48:25

So, the person then says I recently found out that COVID-19 is disproportionately affecting women worldwide. How have you been coping through lockdown as mothers, and professionals and what advice do you have for current and future mothers, considering that the global situation does not seem to be getting better.

48:51

I mean it's a massive thing, are we talking about,

48:54

if I'm going to be absolutely honest and transparent. I nearly cracked sometimes like I literally felt like I was going to scream. I was screaming internally. And that was because I had to keep working. I was working I was writing a lot of funding applications trying to sort things out because I sit at home, like I said, you know, I'm in more of the administrative side of things, and that continued. And it was really hard because there was not one moment that we weren't apart, not one moment.

49:36

And,

49:37

and I just, it's hot. There's no time like you already don't have to. You don't have time to go to the toilet in private, you know like literally that doesn't even exist, I don't have my shower time, I don't have my point of time I don't have my eating time, I don't have working time, and because of that. There are moments where you know it's fine you just get along and you you answer a million questions or just,

you know, sit there and just be quiet and I won't play with you I'm so sorry you feel like you're pushing your child away a lot. So it's like I'm pushing him away because I need to work, so I'm really guilty about that but at the same time it's not that effective because I'm not really working that well it's I'm stressing out about that. And there's no moment that you can just go and just be alone. So, yeah, that was really hard and yeah the other part of that is. Yeah mother's house. You know what, I even if I didn't have a child, even if this happened, I wouldn't let that stop me from being a mother I think for me it's just I it was, it's important for me in my life I still love my child I still, you know, want want him and his family in my life, but it's not easy but at the same time I'm not going to take that all out on my desires because the world isn't easy it's not an easy place, what we were meant to do just not do anything because it's difficult and I don't,

51:06

I don't want to say like, um, for me because I interacted with quite a few professionals who are mothers during the lockdown and during the time. And everyone just kind of created little windows of, you know I was, I can speak to you between 11 to three, but in the morning I'm doing this or I'm homeschooling or after these hours I'm not available, and I then also felt like I had autonomy to do the same. And that was kind of I was very straight with the guards to on this day it's a bad day because I'm doing this with my child or if I'm being really honest and I'm not trying to be the optimist. But I felt like it is possible for it to actually help us from the standpoint of everyone was, was working remotely. And we're all kind of in the same boat. And yes, we do have the added equation of being mothers and you know single parents etc potentially, but I feel like because we're all working remotely there is room for people to try to level the playing field to try to go for the job that maybe they couldn't go for before because they didn't have the freedom of childcare like he said those issues, but being at home, it is hard grace, but potentially I know of people that are working in the nighttime when the kids are asleep, and it is tiring and it is arduous, but I feel like potentially if we push forward, we can make ground as women and as professionals, moving forward during this kind of pandemic time. And this brings me to another question. Do you feel a responsibility to look after your child more than your partners as a woman. Yeah, I don't know how you guys are partners if you live with them or not. Yeah,

52:56

I mean I, yeah. For the first.

53:00

My child for. He'll be five, and I actually breastfed until he was two.

53:07

Well done.

53:09

To Marine, um, but

53:12

I did for the first two three years. And, but we've got better balance now, I mean, to be fair, like, I look at all the letters I sign off everything I make sure you know the clothes are already in the morning and I

deal with all the kind of management element, but we do her, especially in this period of time. My husband was like literally watching my son, most of the time, because of fact I had to work like physically watching he's been cooking a little bit more than fill the recipe by taught him, you know, so the case of like, I'm in charge in that sense but definitely, definitely we are balancing a little bit more but for the first couple of years. And I had a child that was quite clingy so it really depends on you and your child a friend of mine. Her daughter was cleaning to the Father. His primary caregiver. But, you know, so it really depends on your child I would say but he was quite clingy to me so it was like he was, he was always hanging off with me with whatever I was doing.

54:22

And yeah Nova Nova is the same. I mean, obviously, where it's not been a year yet so we're still figuring out how to be new parents and balance that between each other, and we live together. But yeah, I think I found myself having to like micromanage and it was just really annoying me, because I just felt like I guess I kind of my idea of it was that oh this is 2020 like quick equal and my partners are very. He's got a lot of really great feminine energy and so I just kind of assumed it would be 5050, and it would be like, Yeah, but it isn't, and I think I kind of just have to also have to accept myself that, like, as a mom. I don't know there's just things like, like with the cleanliness I think especially the first year breastfeeding and everything, there's just things that you can't. Unless there's, you can have two of you, it's just never gonna be equal, I think at the start. And I kind of, I just had to accept that and, in some ways, it was, I it was only me that could do certain things for Nova. And I think that was really hard for me to not hard for me to accept but just to get my head around like okay let me shift my perception of what I thought, equal parent in men, because it isn't why it's the women. And now, and then we had to like create a schedule because it just wasn't working, especially during lockdown. Like gray said I just, I was just constantly on all the time I didn't I couldn't work I couldn't do anything. So yeah, me and my partner had to create an actual schedule where it would be set date, you know, set hours of the day we should commit, is that this is both has to happen. And it's getting a bit. It's getting difficult again now because my partner is working again now so he's not in most days. So, yeah, but I think definitely my experience anyway, at least for the first year I might Grace's said,

56:33

um,

56:35

yeah so like it was definitely a mothering.

56:41

Like, as the main caregiver. I have to agree with because I'm reading the question again Do you feel a responsibility to look after your child more than your partner, as a woman, and I do Sorry, I do actually feel that responsibility I have felt that this year like sometimes I feel like if my partner is trying to put into bed and he's been crying for a certain amount of time. I feel like, oh no I need to go and do it, even if that that's his dad I shouldn't. It doesn't matter how long it takes him it takes me sometimes the same amount of time. If my son's in a mood, but I still feel like, Oh no, no, sorry. Comment save you know yeah

57:19

i think i think i think it's it's interesting because I'm gonna go across the grain. Yeah, I go against the grain, I should say. So, because this the word responsibility to look after your child and I think that both parents need to show equal responsibility and looking after the child but I agree with you there and grace during that first year you are the giver and not all women breastfeed but in this case I think all three of us had. And so you do have the necessity of being there to feed the child and necessity of being there to be many things as the main caregiver and in my case and Grace's case in not sure with you as well. You know we opted to to be at home during that first year, and my partner was working. So I was actually given the responsibility, took the responsibility to look after my child. But once she was fairly independent, I will say, my answer to that question now is definitively No, I don't feel that it's my responsibility to look after her I feel like it is our as a unit responsibility and he's very hands on. So in the morning, you know, I might make the breakfast, he might be calming our hair, and vice versa and we interchange. And, but again I think it's very dependent on the the culture, for your own household, and also your partner and your child. But I'm going to move us to the last question, which is what is the most important thing, cultural organizations can do to support mothers I'm going to read the question again, because I want to put the caveat off, we only have three minutes okay so we have to be succinct in our answers. What is the most important thing, cultural organizations can do to support mothers,

59:13

just provide flexibility of working when I worked in institutions and organizations, it just although my last one, they were a little bit flexible but I'm I you know I wanted to work from home ideally I wanted to do more things, and I don't think at that point in time, it would have been, it would work now because everyone sees possible so I just think, for me personally, it's about flexibility and I know people say childcare but it's really tricky because I wanted to childcare right where it's not necessarily one where I work, but I didn't want to take him on the train and commuter times. So mine is that flexibility of how I'm able to work in from what locations.

59:56

Yeah, I definitely agree.

59:59

And yeah, the only thing that grace touched on the childcare, so divide that just depends on where you prefer to have your child looked after I go, but I do think there should be more places that do have crushes so women have that option.

1:00:15

Great massively subsidized

1:00:17

Yeah,

1:00:19

definitely.

1:00:20

Brilliant. Um, I think just to add on to that as well. Um, flexibility, being key and being paramount. And I think we've started finding job shares are happening quite often now. And I think that's a brilliant kind of inclusion into the culture for organizations, whether it's job shares, June pregnancy and job shares after but not feeling like you are going to be out of work are you going to lose your job, being able to have that alternative. Thank you both Thea and grace, and everyone that's attended. I'm going to hand across the Kaiser just to kind of give us her nice farewells as well before we wrap up OSU Kaiser.

1:01:05

Thank you so much. Um, so yeah I just want to close this conversation by saying, a huge thank you to our wonderful host family, and panelists Thea and grace for their time and this wonderful talk. I also want to thank so fen Bridgette for their great work. And also thank you for coming and joining in on this conversation you as an attendee will receive a post event email with an evaluation, as well as more information about the artists and their work. So you can be continue to be connected to this event. And this, these talks will also be released as a podcast, so do keep in touch with our social media, so you'll be able to access them. We really hope that you enjoyed this, and thank you again for being here.

1:02:01

Thank you. Thank you for listening.