

## **Episode 4 - Bodies with Molly Forbes**

### **Intro:**

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*Just a warning, this episode does contain some adult language. So please listen with care, especially if little ears are around. And don't forget to subscribe so you don't miss any future episodes. And if you can spare the time to write a review, please do. It would make my day.*

### **Speaker: Siobhan Miller**

Welcome to Up the Duff pod, a brand-new pregnancy birth and parenting podcast brought to you by *The Positive Birth Company*. In this first series we are diving straight in at the deep end and tackling taboos. The everyday stuff most people experience after having a baby for which nobody likes to talk about. I'll be chatting to friends of The Positive Birth Company about their experiences as well as sharing my own on everything from poo, wee, mind, body, sex and bodily fluids. If it's a bit gross or a bit embarrassing, you can be sure we've got it covered.

Before I go any further and introduce this week's guest, I should probably let you know who I am. My name is Siobhan Miller, my pronouns are she/her. I am a mum to three boys who are co-parent with their dad, and I am currently pregnant with my fourth baby, and I'm doing it solo by choice. I'm also the founder of The Positive Birth Company and the author of "*Hypnobirthing, practical ways to make your birth better*". I love talking about everything relating to pregnancy, birth and the postpartum period. And because I'm lucky enough to have done it a fair few times, I can

confidently say, been there, done that, got the t-shirt, to most of the things we will be discussing from poo dramas to leaky boobs, and I'll be sure to share my stories in the hope they help you feel less embarrassed, and at the very least, so you know you're not alone.

Today I'm recording in Exeter near where I live, and I'm joined by a good friend and ex colleague, she is the founder of Body Happy org and the author of body happy kids and radiates body positivity online under the Instagram handle at Molly J. Forbes.

**Speaker: Siobhan Miller**

Hello, Molly.

**Speaker: Molly Forbes**

Hello

**Speaker: Siobhan Miller**

It's so nice to have you as a guest on the podcast. And as we were just talking about the fact that you used to work for The Positive Birth Company and pre pandemic we're actually working on getting a podcast produced

**Speaker: Molly Forbes**

I know.

**Speaker: Siobhan Miller**

And for various different reasons, mostly COVID related, it didn't happen. And now finally, we're making it happen. And although I'm so gutted, that you no longer work for PBC, it's so nice that you are actually a guest

**Speaker: Molly Forbes**

Yeah

**Speaker: Siobhan Miller**

And we're able to do this together.

**Speaker: Molly Forbes**

I'm gonna try not to take over, I'm gonna try and not kind of be bossy.

**Speaker: Siobhan Miller**

I feel like, I really appreciate you being bossy

**Speaker: Molly Forbes**

Okay

**Speaker: Siobhan Miller**

And taking a lead,

**Speaker: Molly Forbes**

Okay

**Speaker: Siobhan Miller**

And telling me what to do, I miss you, Molly.

**Speaker: Siobhan Miller**

So probably we should say why you left PBC. So, this is why it's kind of a bittersweet moment, obviously absolutely gutted that you aren't with us anymore. But it's because the joyful thing is that you've gone full time doing what you love most. And that is working on Body Happy Org.

**Speaker: Molly Forbes**

Yeah.

**Speaker: Siobhan Miller**

So, do you want to tell us a little bit about that,

**Speaker: Molly Forbes**

Yeah

**Speaker: Siobhan Miller**

before we get started?

**Speaker: Molly Forbes**

It's called the Body Happy Organization. And it's a nonprofit company. So, like a social enterprise. And we work to help adults help the kids in their care be friends with their bodies. So, we do workshops with schools, we do kind of professional development workshops for teachers and anyone who works with children. And we also do lesson plans and resources and we sell books and lots of lovely resources and workshops and training and all sorts of things to help parents raise children who feel content and happy and free in their bodies. Because I know from being a grown-up human, that so many of the issues that we have with our bodies, we're feeling insecure about the way we look, and just feeling like we're not quite good enough,

just as we are. Those issues often happen in childhood. And as a mum of two daughters, I became really interested in this kind of years ago. And that's kind of where my work has led me. So, when I was working at PBC, I was writing my book and launching this nonprofit. And, yeah, it got to the point where I was just spinning too many plates and couldn't do it all anymore. So had to make the sad decision to leave. But it's lovely to be here.

**Speaker: Siobhan Miller**

Yeah

**Speaker: Molly Forbes**

today.

**Speaker: Siobhan Miller**

It's so, so

**Speaker: Molly Forbes**

We're not far away, away

**Speaker: Siobhan Miller**

No, No

**Speaker: Molly Forbes**

I'm still in Devon, so

**Speaker: Siobhan Miller**

We're still friends. It's like saying goodbye to you as a colleague

**Speaker: Molly Forbes**

Yeah

**Speaker: Siobhan Miller**

But not as a friend.

**Speaker: Molly Forbes**

Yeah.

**Speaker: Siobhan Miller**

So given all of that, it should come as no surprise that today we are talking about bodies. From boobs to bumps, bellies to bums, we're going to be talking about the

inevitable expansion that happens during pregnancy. And what happens after. Something that I always find really curious about our society is how there's this kind of expectation to bounce back essentially, to have a baby, and then as soon as possible look like you never had a baby. Instead of it being something that you're really proud of is kind of like there's a shame around looking like you had a baby. And there's so many terms we hear not just for mums either for Dad, Dadbod, or like mumsy looking, there's so much kind of negativity around looking like you've had a child, and then celebrating that you don't. So, compliments like, you look like you never even had a baby

**Speaker: Molly Forbes**

Yeah

**Speaker: Siobhan Miller**

you know, you've bounced right back.

**Speaker: Molly Forbes**

Yeah.

**Speaker: Siobhan Miller**

And I find it so curious. Because I know in other cultures, actually, it's the opposite. And people actively celebrate becoming a parent, and wear things like a scarf in a certain way to kind of indicate that they are a mother. And we have the complete opposite. And I know you've probably got a lot to say about this.

**Speaker: Molly Forbes**

I think it's; I mean, I don't want to go all deep right at the beginning. And I know this is meant to be like a really like hearted episode. So, I'll try not to get all serious.

**Speaker: Siobhan Miller**

We'll bring it back up, we'll go deep, and then we'll bring it back up. The laughs are coming people.

**Speaker: Molly Forbes**

I guess. It's interesting, because it feeds into all of these kinds of systems, of if you think about like capitalism and the patriarchy, I've gone straight in there with capitalism and patriarchy. But basically, it's this idea that kind of how we value people. So, I think in our culture, we have like a real emphasis on the way people look. And the way that people look is often valued in terms of youth, and firmness, and smoothness and we have a very clear idea of what beautiful is, and part of youth

and being young and vibrant is being fertile. And then it's almost this idea that once you've had a kid, then you almost become invisible in society, because you don't serve that purpose anymore.

So, I remember, as a new mum, really noticing that the way that people interacted with me just strangers in the street was different. If I was pushing a pram or I had a baby with me, I almost felt like my purpose in society at large had changed. And that made me feel really different about my identity. And then that inevitably came back into how I felt about my body. And I remember being in a shop, I went to Next to get some babygrows when Effie, my youngest was tiny. She was like two days old, and none of her, they were all too big for her. And I remember, she was in the car seat, but like on the floor, and I went to pay, and the lady behind the till was like, oh, when are you due? Because I still had that bump, which is really normal. Because obviously, my body had just done this miraculous thing of giving birth to a baby, and I still had this visible bump. And I remember being mortified, you know, and she was poor woman, she was probably more mortified than me because I said I've had her my baby, quite cringe moment. But I remember thinking, oh, you know, I still look pregnant. I, you know, it was the way that she interacted with me when she thought I was just about to have the baby was totally different to the way that she interacted with me when she'd realized I had the baby. And it was just a really interesting moment where I realized how different we treat people based on the way they look, how their bodies look, what we think their value is in society. We don't value parents enough in our culture. And that's shown through the fact that childcare isn't affordable and wraparound childcare is not a thing and we don't really value unpaid work in the home and women and parents who tend to stay home are often kind of less valued overall and this idea of like being shirking their work or something, but yeah, we don't make it easy for people to get back to work. All of that just shows that we don't have that value on, on, we say that we value families and parents but actually, I don't think that we do as a culture.

**Speaker: Siobhan Miller**

That's so interesting how

**Speaker: Molly Forbes**

And all of that fits into how our bodies work.

**Speaker: Siobhan Miller**

Yeah, think how bodies actually relates to all of these other factors like political factors, a lot of them

**Speaker: Siobhan Miller**

It's interesting that you said that, obviously I'm pregnant now. And I do enjoy feeling really special when you walk around and people get up and give you their seat on the tube. And people are like really like smiley and like when are you due and like ask you loads of questions. And it's true, because honestly, this is my fourth. So, I've been on the flip side three times already, then you become a bit of a burden and inconvenience when you're pushing your buggy around. And you definitely aren't treated in this kind of special way. And that's what I'm really enjoying about pregnancy is, people treat you in a really special way. Like, can I help you or when you've got a buggy, you are more of an inconvenience.

And I remember actually, it was some Christmas time after my second son was born, he was born at just before Christmas. And I'd been out to shops, obviously pregnant, and people gave me space. And were really lovely to me. And then I remember going to a shop just after I'd had him. It was very busy Christmas time shopping and people like bumping into me and just, you know, me feeling actually to get out of this. This is not a safe space to be with my newborn. And yeah, completely overnight, like you go from being pregnant and it's like, wow, we'll give you space and look after you to you having a baby and then being like you're in the way.

**Speaker: Molly Forbes**

Yeah, get on with it, get on with it, get back

**Speaker: Siobhan Miller**

It's so interesting

**Speaker: Molly Forbes**

in the kitchen kind of thing. Yeah, it's definitely, that's definitely a thing. And that really impacts how we feel about our bodies, both when we're pregnant, and after we've given birth as well.

**Speaker: Siobhan Miller**

Yeah, and what do you think the role of social media, another massive topic, but I find social media very interesting place because I see and follow lots of people online, who promote body confidence, including yourself. And it's really, really helped me, I honestly attribute a lot of my increasing body confidence to the people I see on social media. But that might be more reflective of who I follow rather than the whole of social media. So, I just wondered whether you thought that social media makes that pressure worse? Or actually, is there a body positive movement that's gaining momentum? And actually, social media is like a tool that helps?

**Speaker: Molly Forbes**

Yeah, there's so much nuance, and it isn't necessarily sort of straightforward, yes, or no, black and white answer, because on the one hand, social media can be an amazing force for change. And I wouldn't be able to be doing the work that I'm doing now, if it wasn't for social media. You know, you can reach lots of people with your message, you can immediately push back negative messages wherever they're coming from. And you can kind of really build a community. But the other side of it is that, I guess, particularly with platforms like Instagram, they are still facial platforms.

So, the thing with body image, so a really simple way to put it is body image is the way that we think and feel about our bodies, yeah. It's a psychological construct. So, lots of people think that, oh, if I just changed the way my body looks, I'll feel better in my body. But actually, because it's a psychological construct, it's more of a mindset thing. So actually, that isn't the case. And that's why you can find supermodels that really fit that beauty ideal, who still feel bad about their body. And the reason for that is because they objectify themselves, they see themselves as an object. We're all encouraged to do that, to kind of view our bodies from a third person perspective, rather than living in the experience of our body. So, objectification is not good for body image. And social media encourages us to objectify ourselves because it's a visual platform.

But then there's also nuance, because we know that seeing body diversities, i.e., a range of different types of bodies is really good for body image, because it makes us realize that all bodies are good bodies, our bodies are all meant to be different. And we don't often get that diversity in mainstream media, like TV and film, for example, or magazines, if anyone still reads magazines, if you're like, from the 1990s, like me. So that's where the nuance is because actually body positivity as a movement has pushed back against, you know, this idea that there's only one type of body.

But then the nuance again, just to add another layer of complexity is that there is research to show that actually the messages that we're getting from that, even that body positive content can really impact how people feel about their body. So, for example, you might get a really simplified message like, love your body, just love your body. And actually, that can actually not be a positive thing. And that can make people feel worse, because what if they just can't love their body, then they feel like not only is their body not looking the way that they think it should look, but also, they're failing at body positivity. It's just like another thing to fail at. And I should say body positivity is not just feeling good about your own body. It's about you know, knowing that all bodies around you are good and worthy of respect and equality,



equity. And so that's where the difficulty can be so for me like when I'm thinking about like, what I'm consuming on social media, I try and an even with, like content that shows a diverse range of bodies. I'm always trying to think, right, is this encouraging me to think of a body as an object or is this encouraging me to think about what my body can do and how my body feels? And you know, that's not to say that we should all stop posting pictures of ourselves enjoying ourselves on holiday in a bikini, if that's what you want to do. Because that there is a place for that. But actually, it's about more than that. Because if we're not including all bodies in the conversation, trans bodies, disabled bodies, fat bodies, it's not just about learning to love your stretch marks, it's about feeling at one in your own body, and then respecting and treating all bodies equally, whatever they look like, and however they function. And social media is an amazing opportunity to really help people do that. But as with anything it's messy, and it's not straightforward.

**Speaker: Siobhan Miller**

Also, I think a massive factor is who you follow.

**Speaker: Molly Forbes**

Yeah.

**Speaker: Siobhan Miller**

So, you know, if you are following people, I don't watch love Island.

**Speaker: Molly Forbes**

Yeah

**Speaker: Siobhan Miller**

Love Island

**Speaker: Molly Forbes**

Yeah

**Speaker: Siobhan Miller**

Like Love Islandesk people I know what they look like. Very beautiful

**Speaker: Molly Forbes**

Yeah

**Speaker: Siobhan Miller**

in inverted commas, bodies. You know, if your feed is full of people like that, then obviously, you're going to be getting a very different experience to your feed being full of diverse bodies and people that are confident in their bodies and are celebrating that. And I guess you're gonna get a very different experience of social media, depending who you're following. So, I guess that's a good tip is kind of, you know, if you are listening, and that is something that you're struggling with either being pregnant or post birth, actually thinking about when you go on social media, it's like, you want to feel good, not bad. It shouldn't be like you go to it, and it makes you feel bad. So maybe thinking about who you are following

**Speaker: Molly Forbes**

Yeah, definitely

**Speaker: Siobhan Miller**

And muting people, you don't have to unfollow, I've learned, you can just mute, so that you don't get to see. But I think there's obviously a massive topic. And obviously, it's your area of expertise. So, we could talk about this for hours, or in fact, do like a whole series on it. But in the interest of keeping things light, I thought we could share some of our funny or personal experiences and the learnings that we've had from them. Thinking about this, like right back to my first baby. So, this is when I was 20. He's now almost 16. And one of the things I did which I, I feel very sorry for my younger self, but also it does make me laugh at my kind of naivety, is that when I came to pack, my birth bag for hospital, and your obviously pack clothes for going home in, I packed a pair of pre pregnancy trousers. And I thought I was being really clever because I packed with an elastic waist. So, I thought you know, like it's not like they're a pair of jeans. So, I packed these pre pregnancy trousers to go home in. And obviously when it actually came to put them on, I couldn't even get them up past my thighs. But the naivety of it, I literally thought well, the bump will go I give birth and then I'll just be in my normal clothes. And when I shared this with Amy who works at PBC, who we both know, she said she did exactly the same with her first. So, I'm thinking it wasn't just me, that made that mistake. But yeah, I genuinely thought you just give birth to the baby. And

**Speaker: Molly Forbes**

yeah, and you think you would just like

**Speaker: Siobhan Miller**

Like, back to normal, like, actually your body changes, you know, hugely, not just the bump. And you know, it will take a long time for your body to return and it may never return to exactly how it was before.

**Speaker: Molly Forbes**

Yeah, that's ...

**Speaker: Siobhan Miller**

that made me laugh, but also, it makes me think, poor me, like silly Siobhan

**Speaker: Molly Forbes**

After I had Effie, so Effie is my second and I remember I kept like right up until really recently, I'm talking six months where Effie is now seven. It's a long time ago that she was a baby. I had a pair of maternity joggers that were like my favorite joggers and I carried on wearing them for years and years and years after she was born. Because they were just so comfy. And I remember kind of with Freya feeling, Freya is my eldest who's now 12. And I remember feeling the same thing with Freya like, I should be out of the maternity clothes really quickly because I wasn't pregnant anymore. And I shouldn't be wearing those clothes. Why? Who made that rule up? We should wear maternity clothes all the time if we want to. If there's a cut you wear whatever is comfortable and what you feel good in and get away from this idea that you should be a certain size or you should be wearing, like should, what should even mean? You know I wish that I had kept all of the kind of you know maternity clothes I had with Freya for longer and rather than forcing myself into clothes that were dead uncomfortable, because I thought that that's somehow what I should be doing.

**Speaker: Siobhan Miller**

But I think loads of people will relate to that. And actually, funnily enough, I bought packs of massive black pants for afterbirth with my third baby. So, by this point, I was a little bit wiser. And I bought these like cotton pants from like Sainsbury's, that multipacks in sizes like much bigger than my normal size, thinking that they would be great for like afterwards, you know, to accommodate the big pad and then I would throw them away you know, that they would go, they were just temporary pants, I still have those pants and I wear them all of the time

**Speaker: Molly Miller**

You're wearing them now

**Speaker: Siobhan Miller**

They just so comfy right.

**Speaker: Molly Forbes**

Yeah

**Speaker: Siobhan Miller**

I know, I literally, they're like my nighttime pants. Because I'm like, they're so comfortable. That's like a whole different topic about whether people

**Speaker: Molly Forbes**

That's it, come back to your armpits and pants

**Speaker: Siobhan Miller**

wear pants in bed, but like, yeah, and I've kept them and I have like no shame in keeping them. I'm like they are my comfortable pants and they were meant to be like temporary pants. But it wasn't always like that. And I remember actually, after my second was born, I was invited to someone's birthday, a good friend's birthday, and they were having an afternoon tea, and it was in one of those fancy London hotels. So, you kind of dress up and I remember squeezing myself, squeezing being the key word into a jumpsuit of mine. It was like a fitted one. And I had like this nice jumpsuit on and I had like heels on and I was like feeling good about myself. Probably feeling good cos I've managed to squeeze myself into this, right. My baby was quite young. Anyway, I went there, central London. It was like near Hyde Park or somewhere like that, not in like a shopping area. And as soon as I sat down, the whole thing split up the back. Not like a little hole, like the whole seam, like up my bum, like all the way up the back so just like flapped open, revealing, like my bum and pants. Obviously, none of my friends had like a spare change of clothes with them, so I would you know, when near shops to panic buy an outfit. It was like summer so it was warm. I had no other things like with me just going around with this like flapping jumpsuit.

**Speaker: Molly Forbes**

What did you do?

**Speaker: Siobhan Miller**

Well luckily, one of my friends had a sweatshirt in her bag, like a thick kind of sweater. And I tied it around my waist. So that I had this like sweater like hiding my bum. And basically, spent the rest of the time at this like really fancy afternoon tea in what was like my nice outfit, but with this random white sweater tied around my waist.

**Speaker: Molly Forbes**

At least you had big knickers on.

**Speaker: Siobhan Miller**

Yeah. Well hopefully, Although, that was pre the big pants. I'm not sure. I can't remember what pants I had on. But I just remember thinking like, that has happened because I have squeezed myself into something, that kind of desire to get back was like really strong. And I'm ashamed to admit it now, but honestly, the like the size in the label of the clothing would affect how I felt about myself. And now I think that's so crazy. Like how would a size printed on a label make a difference to how I feel. Like my body is not changing from day to day. And also, we know that from shop-to-shop sizing is very different. But there was definitely a phase in my life where if it was a size 10, like even if it was uncomfortable to squeeze myself into it, I would get that rather than by the size 12 which 100% would have fitted me better. Because I had in my mind like, well, no, I was a size 10 before. So, I've got to be a size 10 again, I don't want to accept a size 12. And I think like a lot of people must relate to that. Because I hear people keep like their clothes for years thinking like, I'm gonna get back into those clothes from pre baby. And actually, they just end up taking up loads of space. And then years later, you finally like passed them on. But they just sit there reminding you that you're not the same size and making you feel bad. And I feel so liberated that now I'm like, I'm just gonna buy the outfit that fits me. Like, it doesn't matter if it's 12 or 14 or whatever size it is XXL, like if it's comfortable, I'm going to wear it. That's the main thing now when shopping for like comfort. But there was definitely a large period of my life where I was like, I want to get back to that size that I used to be.

**Speaker: Molly Forbes**

And when you've had just had a baby, not only is your shape changing, but your body processes are still changing. So, at that point, I remember being really shocked that I was still like just leaking so much blood, I had a pad the size of a double duvet like a king size duvet basically wedged into my knickers and you feel like your boobs are leaking, everything feels vulnerable and raw. And actually, that is the one point we should be doing this at all points in our life. But if there's ever a point in your life to wear clothes that nurture your body, and feel comfortable on your body, and make you feel protected, and safe and comfortable, it's when you've just had a baby when your body is literally just trying to mend itself, you know. But the thing about sizing is really interesting, because I think that I mean, it's a massive issue, you could do a whole podcast on that alone, because obviously for lots of people who are pregnant, you know, or have just had a baby, they might not even be able to get their size in the

shop anyway, because sizing isn't inclusive. So, for loads of people, you know, never mind a size 14, they need a size 22. And that size, that is not available on the high street. And that's a whole other conversation. How's that going to make someone feel about their body? You know, whether they've just given birth or not.

But I just think if there's anyone listening to this right now who's struggling with how their body feels after having a baby or they're pregnant, and they're kind of trying to get to grips with this new changing body, just try and like those moments that you can just try and tune in to how your body feels and sort of lose the noise of how it looks, which I know is really difficult because the way that we look can be impacted by all sorts of different things, including how people treat us. But trying to lose that noise and really focus on well what feels good today. What do I want to wear today? You know what's going to make me feel good? What's comfortable for us now as we're recording this. It's a boiling hot day, I wanted to wear something like floaty and comfortable and loose and that's what I was thinking about this morning. You know, as I was getting dressed also maybe you want a bit more support, maybe you've got breast pads, and you want to have a really comfy bra, don't like go and spend loads of money on a lacy bra, put something comfortable on, you know

**Speaker: Siobhan Miller**

A lot of sense

**Speaker: Molly Forbes**

Our bodies should be like, we need to look after them. When you just had a baby, your body exists to look after like this other human. So, you have to look after yourself as well. And you wouldn't put your baby in something uncomfortable. We put babies and baby grows and comfortable, soft cotton things and you should be showing that same level of care and love to your own body. Because your body has done something amazing

**Speaker: Siobhan Miller**

and not doing as I did and squeezing yourself into

**Speaker: Molly Forbes**

Yeah

**Speaker: Siobhan Miller**

a jumpsuit that is too small.

**Speaker: Molly Forbes**

You should have worn a baby grow

**Speaker: Siobhan Miller**

And I'm busting out of seams

**Speaker: Molly Forbes**

You should have worn a baby grow to afternoon tea.

**Speaker: Siobhan Miller**

Often, obviously, like body, body image, body confidence, you know, it affects everybody, everybody, you know, to varying degrees. But I think particularly when you go through pregnancy and that postnatal period, your body undergoes so many huge transformations in such a short period of time. I think it's quite unlike anything, like any other period in your life maybe apart from when you're a baby and you grow quite rapidly as well.

**Commercial break**

*The Positive Birth Company offers award winning online courses that are affordable, accessible, and inclusive, giving you on demand access to leading experts whenever you need them. You can watch on any device from anywhere in the world at any time of day or night. They are also the creators of the Freya app, the world's first virtual birth partner app and produce tons of free resources and workshops to help you navigate everything from the early days and weeks after birth, breastfeeding, bottle feeding and baby loss as well as specific workshops for LGBTQ+ parents and black women and birthing people. All of these workshops are completely free, and you can find them on the Positive Birth Company's YouTube channel. And if you're pregnant and looking to connect with others who are due at the same time, then go to The Positive Birth Company's Facebook page and hit the group's tab to find your bump club. These groups are free to join and are a great place to go for support, advice and solidarity. You might even make a friend for life.*

*Again, I'll be sure to include links to everything I've mentioned in the show notes.*

**Speaker: Siobhan Miller**

If you've lived in a body for many years, and then you become pregnant, there's like these huge changes. And I think that was when I, when I was younger, I thought was just your tummy, like just your bump, but actually, I know that sometimes one of the very first signs that you're pregnant is your boobs. And I do remember with one of my pregnancies I think was my second like they just rapidly like in the early weeks, you know before I told anyone just like rapidly expanded, I had to let go and by

emergency bras and a bigger cup size. But also, they were so tender that I couldn't like lie on my side or even if my arm brushed my, the side of my boob when I was getting dressed. It was like so tender. But it felt massive to me, these massive boobs. And then obviously your bump, you know expands, your tummy as your baby is growing

**Speaker: Molly Forbes**

Body hair

**Speaker: Siobhan Miller**

Body hair

**Speaker: Molly Forbes**

I had like a massive long line of hair down my belly like

**Speaker: Siobhan Miller**

I had that

**Speaker: Molly Forbes**

Like a caterpillar

**Speaker: Siobhan Miller**

Yeah,

**Speaker: Molly Forbes**

Of fuzz and again

**Speaker: Siobhan Miller**

And on the face

**Speaker: Molly Forbes**

Yeah. And that links in with what we think you know, women should look like we have this idea. Women should be smooth, you shouldn't be hairy, they shame around body hair, and that's been pushed back on social media. But I remember with Freya particularly, this is 12 years ago, 13 years ago, I was pregnant with her, and I had this like proper thick line of fuzz all the way down from my tummy button right down to like my vulva. And it was just this like, it was like pubic hair all the way down my belly. And I'm thinking what do I do with this? Should I shave? It's unsightly you know, so



**Speaker: Siobhan Miller**

I used to do so much like when I, in my earlier pregnancies, like, I wax that off. Like I went and got my facial hair taken off, you know, wanted to get rid of all the signs of pregnancy. And I do, 16 years later now with my fourth, I feel completely differently. And when I see that little fuzz light up in the mirror, I'm like, wow, that's happened because I'm pregnant. I know that it's probably gonna go afterwards like it has done before. But I'm like, fascinated in awe of like all these crazy changes. But I very much vividly remember when I wasn't feeling that way about it. And I'm glad that now I do but yes, so many changes and people's foot size change

**Speaker: Molly Forbes**

Yeah, that happened to me

**Speaker: Siobhan Miller**

Because the muscles, relax

**Speaker: Molly Forbes**

Yeah

**Speaker: Siobhan Miller**

the relaxing in your body softens your muscles, your actual bones in your feet, like expand and sometimes you might end up with a different foot size.

**Speaker: Molly Forbes**

That happened to me

**Speaker: Siobhan Miller**

You can't wear any of your shoes.

**Speaker: Molly Forbes**

Yeah, I could only wear Birkenstocks when I was pregnant with Effie because my feet swelled up from about 20 weeks. I had swollen feet and it hurt to put my trainers on and Birkenstocks were dead comfy because my feet kind of expand in them. But I was surprised by that

**Speaker: Siobhan Miller**

You are surprised, but one of the things I remember that was so unexpected was I always had actually quite small bump in terms of like how it measured. They always said that the bump measured small and they have additional scans and my babies were all fine weight but obviously just the way I carried the baby. But I remember one

day turning around and seeing my bum in the mirror. And it looked like I had been whipped. And it took me a while to work out like what, like have I sat on something like literally like red whip marks across my bum. And it was all stretch marks. Because stretch marks when they start, I don't know if it's always, but they're not white straightaway. They are like a red I guess where the skin is like stretched and then they go white. I remember being so shocked. Like I had stretch marks all across my bum and none on my bump which is where you might expect to see them. And I was like, why is my ass expanding? Like I'm not growing a baby and my bottom? Why is my bum got so big?

**Speaker: Molly Forbes**

I got them on my thighs.

**Speaker: Siobhan Miller**

Yeah, that was shocking. That was like completely unexpected. I was like on board with growing a bump, and possibly getting stretch marks on my tummy. I was like completely shocked by turning around and seeing my bum and being like what has happened? And even now fourth time round, like I still turned to Google, like Google, like why is, why is this, what's this about? But I've noticed that my thighs have definitely got bigger. The reason I've noticed is when I'm walking now, they're like rubbing together.

**Speaker: Molly Forbes**

Chaffing, yeah.

**Speaker: Siobhan Miller**

rubbing together. And in this Heatwave, I'm like, this is horrible.

**Speaker: Molly Forbes**

of course

**Speaker: Siobhan Miller**

They're rubbing together

**Speaker: Molly Forbes**

Of course and like

**Speaker: Siobhan Miller**

Chafing and I haven't had that before. So, I go Google, like, why is my thighs getting bigger. And obviously, I found out that apart from water retention, your body stores

fat stores ready for the baby and to produce milk and thighs are commonplace where your body will hold those fat stores.

**Speaker: Molly Forbes**

Our bodies know what they're doing.

**Speaker: Siobhan Miller**

so now I'm like, wow, it's amazing. Like my thighs are like getting ready, they're getting ready for the milk production. And this won't happen for everyone. Of course, like people have different experiences. But like, so much of your body changes in a very short amount of time. And then just where maybe you've gotten used to it, you give birth, and it's like a whole new body that you've got to like make friends with

**Speaker: Molly Forbes**

It's hard, it's a really hard time for body image because you're vulnerable. So, there are like some key points in our lives when we can be vulnerable to feeling insecure in our body. And the post birth period is one, the research actually shows that like during pregnancy, people's body image tends to be fairly stable. And I think that might actually be because what we're saying before about the pregnant bodies being kind of celebrated. And we sort of, you know, you're treated kind of special. But that after period is a vulnerable time. And just the same way as adolescence is when you're going through all those hormonal changes and your body changes.

But our bodies know what they're doing. They're doing all these amazing things. And whether it's your feet growing or having a hairy tummy, or hairy face, or stretch marks on your bum, like, there are reasons for all of these changes. So, knowing that there are reasons and knowing that your body is doing exactly what it needs to do, and what it should be doing it's miraculous. Really focusing on that can be really good for how you feel in your body. And also knowing that, you know, a lot of the images that we see even on Instagram of pregnant people, or people who've just given birth aren't necessarily real, you know, we know that they've been like photoshopped or touched up. And because we live in, particularly in the UK, anyone listening to this in the UK, normally, it's not dead hot all the time. So, we don't really see people walking around in bikinis or swimsuits, we don't really see what people look like under their clothes. And we have a real kind of prudish thing in the UK about nakedness. And that doesn't help either, because we kind of think, oh, well, everyone must look different. But what's, you know, you'd like take your clothes off, no, what is this? What am I looking at? And actually, it's totally normal. It's what your body should look like.

**Speaker: Siobhan Miller**

And I think they're so true, actually, about pregnancy. And you said, there's research to say that people's body image is quite stable in pregnancy. And it actually is more difficult after birth and that's interesting because just like my own personal experience, I love my bump. Like I literally feel peak body competence when I'm pregnant, even though I'm obviously bigger than normal. But I don't know if it's the shape. And maybe that ties into that shape and pregnancy being celebrated. But like I love the shape of pregnancy and the bump. But also, it reminded me of what you said earlier, which was that we celebrate bodies that are firm, and all of that. And obviously when you've got like a tight bump, my bump is like rock hard. And I feel like the most toned. I am in my life. I know it's not actually toned. But afterwards, I have soft tummy, which I know is completely normal, but like I don't have a six pack or anything. So, I'm used to having a very soft tummy. And then when I'm pregnant, I'm like, I just feel like Yes, super toned and like hard. I wonder everything's firm, you know

**Speaker: Molly Forbes**

It's still fitting that ideal in some way

**Speaker: Siobhan Miller**

I guess, maybe weigh in. And then afterwards, obviously, everything is the opposite. Everything is soft, and leaking and different and changing. And for me my personal like journey through this from first baby where I'm like trying to squeeze myself into tiny clothes and berating myself that they don't fit through to now where I kind of look at that facial fuzz, and I'm like, wow, I'm in awe of my body. What advice would you have? Because it's not as easy as saying. Just look at your body and be in awe of it. Like it's miraculous. Embrace it. Do you have any advice for people that are

**Speaker: Molly Forbes**

Struggling

**Speaker: Siobhan Miller**

struggling like real time with how their body's changing?

**Speaker: Molly Forbes**

I think like it's really important, like whether you're pregnant or you're not the number one thing I say to anyone who's struggling is give yourself a break and recognize that body shame is normalized in the culture that we live in, it's very difficult to like your body and be friends with your body and be content in your body, when we live in this culture that's constantly giving us messages about what bodies

should look like, and what bad bodies are and what good bodies are. And we get these messages right from when we're children.

So first of all, there's no shame in feeling like that. But it doesn't mean that because it's normalized that you have to feel like that, just recognizing and just having a moment to just kind of accept that actually, you're not going to unlearn a lifetime of negative messages about your body overnight, it's not going to be something that you can suddenly like flip a switch and just love your body. Like it's not I'm not going to be like that.

**Speaker: Siobhan Miller**

Yeah. My evolution of this has been like over 16 years.

**Speaker: Molly Forbes**

Exactly

**Speaker: Siobhan Miller**

It's been a lot 4 babies. And now finally, I'm like, in a different place.

**Speaker: Molly Forbes**

Yeah. So first of all, I would say kind of just give yourself a bit of a break, and be compassionate with yourself, because it's not surprising. But second of all, recognizing that you don't have to feel this way. And just being aware of where the message has come from. It's this thing called media literacy, which I do with kids, but it works with adults as well. And it's just kind of critically thinking about things. So, when you see something, try and notice how it makes you feel, whether that's an advert or a comment from a friend, you know, baby group or whatever, or something on Instagram, just trying to think critically about it. Maybe, for example, you're a new baby group, and there's another mum, or parent who's talking about wanting to lose the baby weight. And that has made you feel insecure in your body and making you feel like you need to lose the baby weight, or maybe you've got a friend who's pregnant, who's talking about the best way to lose stretch marks or whatever. Now thinking critically about that would look like, okay, I wonder why they've said that maybe that's because they've got ideas about what perfect bodies should look like, maybe they're dealing with some of their own issues about their body, that doesn't have to be a comment on my body, I know that my body is good, and it's doing what it needs to do. I know that stretch marks are normal, I know that post baby weight gain is absolutely normal. It's what my body needs to do.

Thinking critically about what they're saying, rather than just having to kind of absorb it and say, Okay, that's true. That's therefore how I need to feel. And being

aware and mindful of those messages can be quite an empowering thing. Once you sort of start to lift the lid, it's a bit of a Pandora's box, you start to notice the messages everywhere. And actually, a really common response to that is to start to get quite angry. And that's kind of, it's almost like a process of grief. And that is the process that you're going to go through to lose some of these messages and unlearn some of these messages. It's a process

**Speaker: Siobhan Miller**

Reminds me a lot about birth. And that period, I went through recognizing how many ways we are told that birth is something to fear and then feeling angry, and anger fueling me to be like, no, like birth doesn't have to be like this, but is that conditioning your whole life. And once you actually open your eyes to see it, you're like I've been sold a lie.

**Speaker: Molly Forbes**

Exactly

**Speaker: Siobhan Miller**

And this has not served me and then you feel kind of angry. So, I can see kind of similarities

**Speaker: Molly Forbes**

And sold is the key word there. Because ultimately, all of these messages that are making you feel bad about your body are coming from a place that is making money off you feeling bad about your body, whether it's you going out to buy the stretch mark cream, or you know signing up to a diet club, or watching some fitness influencer on YouTube, whos going to tell you how to get six pack three weeks after giving birth, like all of these things, it's about money. They want your money, it's a business. So, recognizing that is really important. And there's a whole other conversation to be had about health. But ultimately, the way we feel about our body impacts how we treat our body. And if you feel good about your body, and you treat it with kindness and respect, you're doing the best thing for you, and you're doing the best thing for your baby.

**Speaker: Siobhan Miller**

I think one of the things that you said earlier, which really stuck with me as well was that it's a psychological construct, actually changing your body physically, doesn't necessarily solve the problem of how you feel about your body, because it's all in your mind. And I think that's really interesting. Because if you recognize that all of this is self-talk, or, you know, it's all in your mind, we know that we have the power to

change our thought patterns. It's not easy, it's not a switch, but you can change the way that you think about something. You know, in hypnobirthing, we talked about using positive affirmations to kind of reframe, but if it's in your mind, you do have power over your mind and can change that. And I think that's really, really true. Because, you know, when I think back to obviously how I was after my first and second baby and that kind of desperation to not buy a bigger size and get into something smaller and, and all of that I was way smaller then than I am now. And now I feel way more body confident. And I'm actually bigger. So, it was never about my body.

**Speaker: Molly Forbes**

No

**Speaker: Siobhan Miller**

and it's because my mindsets changed. And I think that's such a good thing to think about that actually going to lengths to change your body isn't going to change how you feel about your body necessarily

**Speaker: Molly Forbes**

No

**Speaker: Siobhan Miller**

It's a change in your mind how you feel about your body,

**Speaker: Molly Forbes**

and you need to change how you feel about bodies in general, because I feel really passionately it shouldn't stop there. It is important to recognize and it's empowering to recognize that there's this personal responsibility element. There are things that we can do on an individual level to feel good about our own bodies. And hopefully as you start to do that work and you start to go through that process, you'll start to recognize how you might treat the bodies of other people around you. Because actually, the way we feel about our body is impacted by how other people treat our bodies as well. So, if you're in a marginalized body, for example, and you've been treated badly, because of the way you look, then no amount of positive affirmations are necessarily going to help with that. But actually, the more that we kind of do that individual work collectively as a society, the more we will challenge some of these messages that mean that somebody's are left behind and excluded, and continually treated with disrespect. And it's a good thing on a collective level

**Speaker: Siobhan Miller**

Yeah

**Speaker: Molly Forbes**

I've just brought the tone right down.

**Speaker: Siobhan Miller**

It's fine, It's fine. I was gonna say that on social media as well, what I find helpful is that actually, the most attractive people that I think are the most attractive people are the people who are confident,

**Speaker: Molly Forbes**

Yeah

**Speaker: Siobhan Miller**

you know that. So, it's not about like, the size of them, or whether they're toned, or they're slim, or they've got like, you know, all of these kinds of stereotypical things that we associate with beauty here in the UK. Actually, the people that I find most inspiring and attractive, are those that are confident in their bodies, whatever size shape that they are. And that's kind of what I suppose I aspire to now is just being confident in my, in my own skin,

**Speaker: Molly Forbes**

You can't measure energy, can you? Energy isn't something that's been recognized as like a number on a scale. And that's the thing that we should all be focusing on the energy that we go

**Speaker: Siobhan Miller**

oh yeah, I've got rid of my scales long ago.

**Speaker: Molly Forbes**

Yes

**Speaker: Siobhan Miller**

And, what's really liberating in this pregnancy is I don't know how much I weighed going into it. I've declined to be weighed in it. And I have no idea what weight I am

**Speaker: Molly Forbes**

Good



**Speaker: Siobhan Miler**

At all. And so, whereas with the others, I knew my starting weight I knew my pregnancy weight, I knew afterwards, what I needed to get back to that's in inverted commas. You can't see me doing it. But now I have no idea. I'm just going with it. And what a weight that is off my, no pun intended, what a weight off my mind, that is just not knowing like, because I don't need to know

**Speaker: Molly Forbes**

that's the perfect two fingers up the system, yeah.

**Speaker: Siobhan Miller**

I don't need to know, you don't need to know, the midwife doesn't need to know, like, I'm managing my pregnancy in a way that I see fit. And I don't have concerns about weight gain. Even I know it's happening you know, that's a positive thing. So that's been quite liberating. But obviously, we need to wrap up, although I appreciate, we could talk all day about like all of the different

**Speaker: Molly Forbes**

So much to say

**Speaker: Siobhan Miller**

Topics that fit under this umbrella. But I wondered if you had and I'm gonna ask everyone the same question, a message that you would like to give your younger self, if you could go back in time with the wisdom you have now? Is there a message you would give your younger self say when you're pregnant for the first time, or

**Speaker: Molly Forbes**

I think I'd go back and just tell myself even as a kid, and this is something that would have served me well, all the way through childhood and adolescence and being pregnant and continues to serve me? Well, now, as I'm getting older, I'm 38 now. So, you know, ultimately, I wish I'd known that bodies are meant to change, our bodies are allowed to change and they're meant to change. They're not meant to stay the same because we're not pieces of plastic. We're living growing organic breathing beings, and our bodies are not meant to be this kind of unmolded kind of thing. And I wish that I'd known that that it's okay to gain weight. It's okay to get looser, it's okay to change in whatever way because that's what bodies do and my body's doing right now and was doing then exactly what it was meant to do. Bodies are allowed to change and they should change. That's what they do.

**Speaker: Siobhan Miller**

That's a really, really good one. Mine would be I would just like to tell myself to buy a bigger size, not only to avoid the mishap of the splitting jumpsuit, but just years of misery of like trying to squeeze myself into clothes that didn't fit and being scared to buy something that had a label with a different size. I just wanna be like Siobhan, buy a bigger size, that's what I would like to tell myself.

**Speaker: Molly Forbes**

and cut the clothing label out. If the clothing labels like a trigger for you. Cut it out, get rid of it, you don't need it.

**Speaker: Siobhan Miller**

It's true that it has literally no bearing on yourself. The number that I shop prints in a label. Well, thank you so much, Molly, for joining me. Would you like to say goodbye to people listening and let them know where they can find you and Body Happy Org?

**Speaker: Molly Forbes**

Yeah. I tend to hang out mostly on Instagram. I'm also on Twitter at Molly J Forbes which is f-o-r-b-e-s and Body Happy Org is bodyhappyorg.com. And we're also on Instagram @bodyhappyorg and you can find all our stuff there and all my stuff. Yeah, I'm on the internet, basically.

**Speaker: Siobhan Miller**

I will be sure to include all of those links to your website and your book and your Instagram in the show notes. Of course, a big thank you to everyone who has listened to this episode. I hope you've enjoyed it has made you smile perhaps even laugh and has given you some food for thought in terms of how you feel in your own body. Next week I'll be talking to Jess Jones aka the fat funny one and author of Own It, how to build confidence completely love yourself and embrace your body. We'll be talking all about sex and building confidence in the bedroom or wherever you might be having sex. Also, sex when pregnant, first sex after birth, solo sex and intimacy. So please do tune in then. And if you've enjoyed this episode, please do share it. We are new to podcasting. So, every share really helps us to spread the word. You can tweet us at up the duff pod. We'd love to hear your feedback. And if you relate to anything that we've talked about today, or have your own story to share, then please do and finally a big thank you to The Positive Birth Company for making this podcast possible. Of course, Thank you Molly for being a super guest

**Speaker: Molly Forbes**

I think you should give yourself a little round of applause that was good. Relax now.

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