



Medicine Stories Podcast

Episode 74 with Samantha Zipporah

Womb Sovereignty, The Dark Feminine,
and Mythopoetic Pregnancy Release

December 17, 2020

[0:00:00]

(Excerpt from today's show by Samantha Zipporah)

The fact that our physical realities are universal, the physical realities of the womb and the process of releasing a pregnancy, regardless of the tools that you use to release that pregnancy, it's a universal experience that has been happening forever.

And there really is this innate intelligence to the uterus of how to hold and release a pregnancy. This is something our bodies know how to do. So anytime that we're using tools to encourage it to do that, that there is a potential that we can honor the innate wisdom of the womb.

(Intro Music: acoustic guitar folk song "Wild Eyes" by Mariee Sioux)

[Intro]

[0:00:47]

Amber: Hey friends! Welcome back to the Medicine Stories podcast, where we are remembering what it is to be human upon the earth.

I am your host, Amber Magnolia Hill. This is Episode 74 with Samantha Zipporah. This episode is very much an echo of Episode 73 on ending pregnancy at home and holistic abortion options. We do go beyond just abortion, but it's definitely integrated into the conversation and really woven into the larger fabric of what it is Samantha does. So if you are here specifically to learn about abortion options, and especially if you are really needing information right away, check out Episode 73 for sure.

Also, the Patreon offerings at the Medicine Stories Patreon page that went along with Episode 73 have a lot of good resources for you there. And for the resources for this episode they're just going

to be in the show notes. I've had a few people ask me where to find show notes. You can always go to my home website mythicmedicine.love, and click on **Podcast** to find show notes.

Certain podcast players, such as Spotify, the embedded links don't come through. So you have to go to the homepage, but I think other podcast players do show those embedded links, always providing lots of resources to go along with each relevant episode. So do check those out to dive deeper.

[0:02:19]

Amber: The Patreon offerings that go along with today's episode coming from my guest, Samantha Zipporah, can be found at Patreon.com/MedicineStories. There are two of them. The first are a few printable coloring pages from her *Mapping the Yoniverse* coloring book, the introduction to and a few of her favorite illustrations from *Mapping the Yoniverse*. It's a printable PDF page format so folks can print out and delight in coloring physical and energetic anatomy diagrams with the whole fam. We talk more about this coloring book at the end of the interview, and I can't wait to print these out.

This second offering there for patrons is the first module from Samantha's Miscarriage and Abortion Support e-course. The first module is called *Pregnancy Release: Finding Commonality*, and you will hear that we talked about that in this interview as well. So this is a six page e-book. Little intro words from it are "People who have miscarriages and abortions have an intrapartum period, a pregnancy release, and a postpartum period. The intrapartum period (pregnancy), pregnancy release, birth/miscarriage/abortion and postpartum period are each unique. The pregnancy release period and miscarriage and abortion experiences have a lot in common with the process of giving birth. The intrapartum and postpartum period for all types of pregnancy release have more in common than not." So that is there as well.

Also in the shownotes the resources from today is included a fact sheet from If/When/How about COVID and self-managed abortion, what the public politicians, law enforcement officials, and medical providers need to know about self-managed abortion and the law. So again, that's in the show notes that you can find at mythicmedicine.love/podcast. It's not on Patreon, although I think it is actually listed in the resource list for the last one or at least this If/When/How website is, and a link to the Self-Managed Abortion podcast that Samantha tuned me into. So this is a whole podcast not just an episode or two, all about self managed abortion in the shownotes.

[0:04:46]

Amber: Okay, Samantha Zipporah is a practical and radical medicine woman. She is an educator, author, and activist who inspires individuals to claim their power through body literacy and sovereignty. A former birth doula whose roots of praxis can be found in traditional midwifery, womb to tomb style care. Sam supports her community with a full spectrum of fertility, sexuality, and pregnancy experiences. Her 20 plus years of experience in service spans personal, professional, and clinical contexts. She provides vital, life-changing education for everyone from professionals to preteens. Her approach is grounded in a solid understanding of biochemistry and biology and nourished by a gift for levity and depth of spirituality.

Quick note that applications are currently open for Sam's Six Month Womb Witch mentorship program, but the deadline is December 21, the Winter Solstice, which is very soon, but the opportunity will come around again for sure. And you should definitely check out

samanthazipporah.com for that and all of her other incredible offerings. And stick around because at the end of the interview, I'm going to be playing a song by Samantha called "The Womb Sovereignty Song."

And before we dive in, I just want to say that in the month since the last episode came out, I have received zero shit from anyone about it. I'm sure it's gonna come up in the future, because that episodes gonna be up for years and years, but so far, it's been all gratitude. And many people have been guided through the process by my guest, including someone who is close to me and who I was really able to help, and it was just such perfect timing with the episode coming out and her unexpected pregnancy.

There's just been a lot of sweet synchronicities, and I love seeing this network of people helping people, growing and deepening and coming more into consciousness, and just knowing that we need to have this knowledge to create community around it and help one another.

So thanks for being here. And thank you, Samantha Zipporah for this incredible interview that we will listen to now.

(Transitional Music: acoustic guitar folk song "Wild Eyes" by Mariee Sioux)

[Interview Begins]

[0:07:08]

Amber: Hi Samantha, I'm so excited to be talking to you. Welcome to Medicine Stories.

Samantha: Thank you, Amber.

Amber: Okay, let's dive in at the beginning with how you came to be doing this super important, beautiful, deep work.

Samantha: So I started studying before I started bleeding, and it was really inspired by watching my mother and sister suffer and being gifted with some kind of clarity around this idea that my body, my womb, was supposed to be a source of power and pleasure instead of pain. And I don't know where I got that idea from the world around me, right? It was a very Spirit-led thing from a very early age.

And from there, I started to study and Rosemary Gladstar's *Herbal Healing for Women* and Christina Northrop's *Women's Bodies, Women's Wisdom* were the first texts that I started studying in junior high. *(Samantha laughs)*

Amber: Wow.

Samantha: Right? So I came at it from an extremely intellectual place of like, "If I study, and I read, and I will learn, and I will know all the things, and I can fix things with my brains, right through knowledge."

And it really took me like a whole other decade to move down from the intellect into my heart and then into my womb, and during that decade, I started volunteering at Planned Parenthood. I started providing pre-teen sex ed and peer counseling and peer education. And then I was nannying for a woman who was having a home birth and was exposed for the first time to midwifery and this idea that our fertility and pregnancy were not a disease that needed to be cured. Through witnessing the homecare — I wasn't at the waterbirth — but I was the two year old's nanny, and, you know, we got to listen to the fetal heart tones and be part of the family home prenatal care.

So yeah, I went on to become a birth doula, to study midwifery, and I've always been really expansive and full spectrum in my study, you know. Like, I've always been paying attention to not just birth, not just miscarriage, but our cycles and contraception and the whole, like, wide view of things. So I'll take a pause there. But yeah, it was just an epic gift that, really, came from something beyond me.

[0:10:30]

Amber: I read — I think this is on your website — you said that your friends joke that “If it's coming out or going in a cervix, call Sam.”

Samantha: Yes. (both laugh)

Amber: So really full spectrum look at all the things you just named, fertility.

I had somewhat of a similar experience, not that — it was somewhat different — but when I was I don't remember how old, but I was definitely a child, like living at home, could have been an adolescent, maybe a teenager, but I think I was younger of feeling really grateful to have been born in a female body and knowing my culture didn't think it was great. You know, I'd only seen like, TV episode childbirths and seeing the commercials for Midol, all that stuff, right? Just being like, “No, this is such a sacred gift. Like I can't believe I get to have periods and then birth babies someday!”

Samantha: Yes. Yeah. Yeah.

Amber: Yeah. So let's begin. There's so much to cover, but...

Samantha: I know.

Amber: And I know you listen to the most recent episode, and you helped me put it together, really. So thank you so much for that.

Samantha: Yeah, it was an honor.

Amber: But you can take everything that we talked about in that episode and sort of expand upon it. And for anyone who hasn't heard it yet, or isn't aware of it, it's about ending pregnancy at home and holistic abortion options.

And something that you pointed out to me is that there are commonalities between all the different kinds of pregnancy release, and I would love to put that context into this conversation.

Samantha: Absolutely. Well, it's going back to this term that I already used, which was the “continuum”, right?

So the “womb continuum” is language that I use. And on this continuum we have our menstruation, our orgasms, all of our different types of pregnancy releases. And really, the more you understand and honor any aspect of that continuum, it just informs the entire connection.

But to focus in on pregnancy release, I use that term in my work to describe any kind of a pregnancy outcome, whether it be a birth of a live baby, or a miscarriage, or an abortion, or a stillbirth, to really honor the fact that any type of a pregnancy involves a gestative holding period, intrapartum, a birthin, releasing period, and a postpartum period.

And no matter how the pregnancy ends, there is alchemy:

Our bodies are changed on a cellular level forever, our psychospiritual process is going to be profound, and it's really a rite of passage. Whether or not it's honored as a healthy rite of passage, which is in community right? But it isn't. It is a rite of passage to be pregnant, no matter how it ends.

[0:13:44]

Amber: And I learned from you that half of pregnancies don't end in birth.

Samantha: Roughly. Yeah.

And it's really difficult to even know specific stats because so many of them are unreported. But we definitely know that around one out of five, somewhere between one out of five and one out of four are released in the first eight weeks in a natural miscarriage, which, in clinical terms, is a spontaneous abortion.

And, you know, abortion rates vary from different places around the country — deliberate ending a pregnancy around the globe, not just the country — but it's around one out of three.

Amber: Wow.

Samantha: Generally speaking.

Amber: Okay, a quick correction here from Samantha:

I mistakenly stated that one out of three pregnancies end in abortion. This is not true. However, the estimate I made that half of pregnancies do not end in the birth of a baby is a statement I stand by and break down below.

So the Guttmacher Institute — totally guessing on that pronunciation — estimates that about 18% of all confirmed pregnancies in the US in 2017 ended in abortion. And the BBC

cites the World Health Organization and Guttmacher, also, for 2017 saying that approximately 25% of all pregnancies end in abortion.

So these stats, along with the reality that miscarriage stats for first trimester are between one and four or one in five pregnancies ending spontaneously, mostly due to genetic incompatibility with life, validate the estimate that nearly half of all pregnancies do not result in a live baby birth.

[0:15:40]

Amber: First, let's talk about the Dark Goddess and the underworld journey. I know you and I are both enamored of the book by Dimitra George *Mysteries of the Dark Moon*. I love that you put this mythic lens over this experience of releasing a pregnancy.

How did you come to tie all this together?

Samantha: Whew. Well, I mean, I guess I almost shared the story when you were starting, when you asked me how I got started on the path, just because I knew that you would appreciate it and that your listeners would most likely appreciate it.

Amber: Yeah, give us the medicine story.

Samantha: (*Samantha laughs*) So one of my first really profound experiences with psychic dreaming, underworld connection was when I was 15 I had a dream that I was pregnant with an owl.

Amber: Wow.

Samantha: Right? (*both laugh*) And it was a horrifying dream of the owl was going to eviscerate me with its extremely sharp talons and beak. And I was really horrified that it was going to grow. I was also scared of a caesarean, and I was also scared of the birthing process, and I had like gory visions of what it would be like to birth this beast that was extremely sharp, razor sharp parts of its body.

And I was so disturbed by this dream, that the next day at school, I was kind of between the veils still. I was really preoccupied with the experience of the dream and not able to focus and not totally in my body.

And one of my girlfriends at the time asked me what was wrong. And I told her my dream. And she shared with me that she was going to have a clinical abortion that Friday, and that she had not told anybody at all, besides the people in the clinic. She hadn't told her lover or any of her family or any of her friends, but that the fear that I was experiencing was hers.

So, I mean, like my entry point, right? I already knew abortion existed. I'd already volunteered at Planned Parenthood, and, you know, I was a pro-choice, but my initiation into the process was already this kind of mythopoetic thing that involved altered state of consciousness and Tarot, you know. I think we got stoned and played with Tarot cards and ate brownies after her abortion (*both laugh*) and had a slumber party and did ritual.

And yeah, so I mean, I was just already in this space of looking at symbolism and archetypes, and looking at the the fact that abortion is this nexus of sex, and death, and birth. And just how those stories, like how we experience those rites of passage and those rituals, have just — I don't know. What are even the words for it?

I mean, Demetra George talks about collective consciousness, versus ancestral wisdom, versus individual consciousness in that book in a way that I feel like abortion always brings up these different narratives and archetypes and mythopoeitics. Whether or not somebody's going to analyze it or dive into it, that there's these stories. Right? The cycle.

Amber: Right and as the cervix is open and blood is passing through, we really are in an altered state of consciousness, and in many ways are like closer to, I don't know, to that veil.

Samantha: Yeah. Yeah, the womb is a spirit door.

[0:20:18]

Amber: So it seems like we could really find companionship and meaning and guidance from our dreams, from our ancestors, from ritua,l from myth, when going through miscarriage, abortion — or really, like any of these processes— birth conception, anything having to do with fertility, but especially when that cervix is open.

Samantha: Yeah, absolutely. Yeah. And then, you know, when we're talking about this womb continuum, we really need to be including menstruation. Right?

It's anytime that— I mean, it's like I use this term a lot— it's the spirit and matter, right? It's this vortex, where spirit and matter move in our bodies undeniably. And absolutely, the way that we treat our menstruation and the way that we honor our bleeding informs the healing capacity and the healing journey of our pregnancy release.

Amber: Oh totally. It makes sense. I'm sorry. I'm just kind of like in a dreamy space talking.

Samantha: It's fine. It's okay!

Amber: It's finally raining here where I live. There's like this extreme relief and release happening all around me outside, and I'm just feeling dreamy, and really excited about this.

[0:21:54]

Amber: You had said to me that “Your ancestors are with you every time the portal of the womb opens.” And in Chinese medicine they talk about blood as consciousness.

Samantha: Yes, both of those things are true.

Amber: Tell me more.

Samantha: Well, I think, again, it goes into that way that our blood connects us to our lineage and our ancestry. And, gosh, the consciousness thing is so profound, you know. Who here, like who listening who menstruates or has experienced pregnancy, hasn't experienced how powerfully the

process of bleeding or releasing a pregnancy will shift your consciousness and the way that you relate to all of your relations really, right?

Whether they be in your household, whether it be your body itself, or your ancestry, that when there's bleeding or when there's a pregnancy, there's an opportunity, if you take it, or it will come knocking, you know, if you're listening. Sometimes you're not even deliberate about it, but there's a lot that we can access that is not just in this dimension.

Amber: Yeah, I recently have been doing some bodywork and having these somatic memories arise, but I don't have an actual memory to meet them, and I was talking to my therapist about that.

And she said, "Oh, you know, I can do trance work and journey work with you. It's one of my specialties, too, to see if you want to access those actual memories, if we can do that."

And I was like, "Okay, yeah, let's. I'll schedule it some time when I'm either just started bleeding or just about to bleed because I've learned over time that trance work is just easy when I'm in that state, whereas it feels sort of hard to reach the rest of the time."

And she was like, "Wow, thank you for knowing that about yourself, and that totally makes sense." And I was like, yeah, you know, "I wish everyone knew that."

Samantha: Yeah, I really adore Alexandra Pope's work and The Red School. Their book is *Wild Power*, and it talks quite a bit about the psychospiritual process of menstruation and what we're able to access through that portal.

[0:24:25]

Amber: Will you tell us the story about the heavy bleed that you had? It was during your teen years that really put you on this path as well.

Samantha: Yeah, I mean, it just opened up a new path, which was the one where we honor the fact that we are spiritual beings having a physical experience; whereas I had really been in this Cartesian-like, dualism view of the body, where I had been trying to intellectually understand how to fix issues, instead of being aware of how incredibly profound and powerful our emotional and spiritual bodies are at influencing our physical bodies.

Gosh, right. It's such an immense story. It's like which pieces of it do I want to share?

But it was essentially a boundary with my mother that I had placed that got crossed. And I began to hemorrhage. It was a phone call with my mom when I had promised myself I wouldn't speak to her for an extended period of time. I was also under a lot of stress from my romantic and sexual relationship, which was quite abusive. So my womb space was already, I think, really stressed out, but I hadn't yet ovulated that cycle.

I'd already been tracking my cycle for quite a long time. I started tracking my blood, a moon chart, as soon as I started bleeding when I was 12. And then I learned how to tell when I ovulate when I was 19, and started tracking both the bleeding and the fertile window.

And so I was 21. I'd been tracking my cycle really diligently and knew it really well, and I had just had a normal menstrual bleed about a week earlier. And I had this phone call from my mom. I was on my bicycle in the middle of the street. I pulled over and answered the phone, and she was in a panic, and I told her that I would call her back when I got home, because my uterus just opened up. And I started to gush blood. It was luckily only a couple blocks from home. I rode my bicycle home and sat down.

And I spent three days nearly bleeding to death after that, and I called my nurse practitioner the next day. And she said that I could come in and get contraception pills, that I could get birth control pills to stop the bleeding, and I didn't want to do that. I hadn't taken pills yet. I didn't want to. I had a lot of issues with it. And I was like, "No, no, I'm going to use herbs, and I'm going to use meditation, and it's going to be fine." But I wasn't a very good herb witch yet, at all, and yeah, I was really stubborn.

And I started to get really, really weak and hallucinate quite a bit and got to the point where I'd get up to change my pad, then I'd pass out on the floor. And my boyfriend took me to the ER, and they told me that I had about a third of a normal adult's red blood cell count in my body.

And they were like, "Are you miscarrying? Did you try and give yourself an abortion?" And I was like, "No, I haven't even ovulated this cycle. I'm definitely not pregnant. I haven't ovulated, yet. I had a normal period last week."

So yeah, they gave me the tests. I wasn't pregnant. They gave me the birth control pills. Those made me vomit horribly. There's a lot of trauma in the hospital, and it's layers that I'm still even digesting.

And I use the term "gyn-rape" to describe forcible penetration without consent, which they gave me a dilation and curettage procedure, which is a standard, later term abortion procedure to remove the walls of my uterus so it would start over and contract those blood vessels really intensely.

Amber: Like to scrape the inner walls?

Samantha: Yeah, yep. A curette is like a rounded razor blade, essentially.

So yeah, I don't know if I've actually told that detailed version of the story in a long time, or ever, in terms of being recorded, and that's just, you know, some of the physiology, right, some of the physical and factual stories.

And what I experienced, hyper-dimensionally, through that process, you know, absolutely also informed the way that I view and experience miscarriage and abortion experiences and birthing experiences.

Even though I was not pregnant, I essentially passed a life through my uterus. It was almost my own life that passed through my uterus.

Amber: Yeah, two-thirds of your life. (*Amber laughs*)

Samantha: Right?

[0:30:25]

Samantha: And I, yeah, I made a choice. I had a really beautiful out of body experience that I remember extremely vividly. And I was having such a lovely time in the astral plane (*Samantha laughs*) and didn't need a body, didn't need an ego or an individual identity at all.

And then I just noticed my body back in the hospital, and it was very weak and very pale, hooked up to a lot of machines, and I was like, "Oh, that looks horribly uncomfortable, what is going on with that girl?" And I realized that that body was something to do with me.

And then I noticed that it was a really nice musical instrument (*Samantha laughs*), and then I came back to it. That was like, the distinct thought that I had. I was like, "I've got some more songs to make. I should probably go play that really wonderful musical instrument."

And yeah, I've learned, you know, I keep learning from that experience. But that gave me a lot of the foundation as I healed from that experience, physically.

I was extremely studious, and I studied a lot of different healing modalities and the uterus, right, because I just really wanted to understand what had happened and how to heal from it. So I learned a ton about herbs and nutrition and how to regulate and heal the menstrual cycle when there's been a disruption.

And really, on that spiritual level, I feel like I really learned how to invite the spirit back into the body when the body had experienced trauma, specifically, wound trauma, and to reinhabit that space in my body as a source of power, instead of a source of pain.

[0:32:34]

Amber: I can imagine that that is very helpful in the work that you do, because so much of what happens to those of us with wombs, especially under the medical system, is traumatic.

Samantha: Yeah. Yeah, I mean, I think that most of it is systematic rape. There is penetration without consent. It's totally normalized. And people are ingesting substances and going under procedures that they don't fully understand or fully want, and it's for profit more often than it is for healing.

Amber: Right, just all these interventions that — well, they exist, so we'll just throw them at you rather than support your body in its innate healing capacities that will help keep you feeling like a whole, spiritual, physical, emotional person.

Samantha: Yes. I mean, it's... we're being super vague and super general, right. There's so many different layers of it. But, I mean, that has been my experience in being an advocate within the medical system, as well, as you know, my own health experiences.

You know, it's a case-by-case basis, but ultimately, I feel like it's about looking at the industry and recognizing the fact that it's an industry, not a healing modality, and that there are some like really useful goods and services provided by this industry. But unless we're being conscious consumers, and we're choosing certain goods and services based on the fact that we think that that is the best

thing for us, then there's exploitation that is happening when we don't understand that what is being offered by that industry is just some of the choices we have.

Amber: That's so good: "It's an industry not a healing modality."

Samantha: Yeah.

[0:34:37]

Amber: Let's cycle back a little bit to abortion. And I really like this idea that you bring about "making decisions in love instead of fear" and "the sacred yes."

In the most recent episode, my guest talked about having a really clear no if you're going to choose to end a pregnancy at home or or anywhere, but especially if you're going to try to use herbs and or misoprostol instead of having a clinical experience.

And I love that you brought in the sacred yes, too. Please tell me more about that.

Samantha: Yeah. So talking about the sacred yes is something that I started doing with abortion clients, really, when I was working as an abortion doula more frequently, and then it is so wonderfully applied to contraception as well, and it's a prerequisite in my conscious contraception class — or not a prerequisite. It's something that's like, essential at the very beginning.

So the sacred yes, is what we do want, right, what we are saying yes to, instead of what we don't want when we're saying no to a pregnancy.

So whether it's contraception or abortion, there's a positive thing that we're wanting to nurture, to gestate, to carry inside of our bodies, to give our vital, sexual, potent life force to. And so the act of actually naming and claiming what it is that we desire — and not that we're ignoring the no. Our no is incredibly powerful and important, and the sacred no of "no baby, no baby, no baby, no baby" is extremely important, but that shouldn't exist in a vacuum, and that there's a lot of healing to be had, if we're able to focus on and integrate what it is that we do want and recognize that the fact of having an abortion or having a contraception practice.

And really, I just want to, you know, side note: contraception practice is like a spiritual practice, when done consciously with the sacred yes, right? It's a practice where you're engaging your consciousness, and your essence with your body. And so if you're not wanting to have a pregnancy, putting your body in a place that is in alignment with your desire.

[0:37:24]

Amber: I'd like to just share a little bit of my personal no, and yes, around my abortion last year. And I share more about this on a Patreon post, where I share the whole story of my abortion last year using herbs and misoprostol at home.

And so clearly, I was saying no to the baby in my womb, which was incredibly hard and sad. But what I was saying yes to was my work in the world, this podcast, namely, and also, and more importantly than that, the children that I already have. Really, when I realized that I am saying no to this, so that I can be more present for them, so that my the resources of my attention, my time, money, all of it is here for the ones that I already brought into the world.

It's already so difficult, mothering, especially in a culture of scarcity. And I think I read recently, I think it was six out of 10 women who have abortions already have children.

Samantha: Yes.

Amber: And so I was saying yes to them. And it once I realized that, that I was freeing myself up like innumerable, countless, countless hours and moments of attention that would have gone into this baby can be further directed towards them, I lost any sense of guilt that I had and really a lot of my sadness, too, because I was honoring that sacred yes.

Samantha: Yes. Yeah. It's such a powerful opportunity to claim what you want. And what's important to you and invest in that and just this recognition that there is absolutely no such thing as fertility or birth or growth without death.

[0:39:33]

Amber: Yeah, and that, like, we've talked about this on the podcast before, but we just frame death as a negative in our culture, which is insane, because it literally happens to every living being.

Samantha: Right, and I—

Amber: No, go ahead I was just gonna say death is not a negative. It just is. It's neutral.

Samantha: It just is! I mean, death is an incredibly important aspect, right? Death and darkness are an incredibly important aspect of the Divine Feminine that have been persecuted and excluded for so long, right? We have such a light and yang and production-oriented culture. This reality that we have to release, there has to be death, and there has to be rest in order to come into a state of action or productivity, I mean, that's a massive healing need in our culture, right?

Amber: And that death gives birth to life. Nothing is going to grow out of the soil, if it's not for the bodies of the dead things in the soil composting and creating what is soil.

Samantha: That was the thread that I was wanting to pick up earlier, and I got distracted was using permaculture principles and applying them to our fertility as humans, and recognizing the womb as zone zero, and recognizing that the ecology — what I heard you saying, when you were talking about your sacred yes with your abortion — was being mindful of the ecology of your family, right, and your fertility and your vital essence, being a source of power and a source of energy in this ecosystem; that you were being aware of how your energy source was part of this greater ecology, and being really intentional about where you're putting it.

Amber: Yeah, absolutely. I love that framing.

[0:41:52]

Amber: Let's demystify the idea of a “natural abortion.”

Samantha: Let's do that. (*both laugh*)

So, I mean, this does beg the question, what is nature (*Samantha laughs*), which is a whole other philosophical tangent, but in my understanding of the body, abortion is both natural, no matter the method, and unnatural.

Oof. Paradox. I'm sorry.

Amber: No, but all deeply true things are paradoxes.

Samantha: Oh, thank you for that. Thank you, Amber.

So I mean, I want to just really say that abortion is natural, all abortion is natural, that every different type of plant and animal and species will self-regulate its fertility and its reproduction. Every different life form will begin and end its reproduction before it's complete sometimes when the resources or the environment are not the correct or ample space to reproduce in.

So I really put abortion in this space of nature, really thinking about our bodies and our energy sources as ecosystems, and recognizing that we're not alone as humans, right. Our consciousness and our will may or may not be unique — and you've done some pretty cool podcasts around plant consciousness and things like that.

But what you're talking about, I believe, when you say “Let's demystify natural abortion,” is this misunderstanding and misinformation that a lot of people have with this idea that herbal abortion is a more gentle experience for the body, or more aligned with nature, right, with the forces of nature.

So I think that that's a possibility for some individuals, but as a general rule, I want people to understand that working with plant medicine to end and expel a pregnancy — and I really want people to understand, also, that ending a pregnancy and releasing it physically are two different things — and plant medicine is often more effective at ending than releasing, right? It can be more effective biochemically than it is at manipulating the neuromuscular process, which creates a big risk for incomplete or infection.

So breaking down our options of abortion into two categories: mechanical and chemical.

Mechanical methods of abortion involve using the physics of suction through a tiny tube in the cervix, applying suction to pull out the endometrium and anything that's attached to it, like an embryo. And that's appropriate, really, up to 12 weeks. And whether or not you do that in a clinic or at home, that's a mechanical pregnancy — ending a pregnancy mechanically through suction.

And that process, from my understanding, really signals to the body that there was a wound inflicted, we've disrupted some tissue, and now let's go in and repair and regenerate. And that process of regeneration and repair, from my understanding of the body, again, is like a lot more immediate when there's a physical disruption. Usually the suction is over in the clinic, within five minutes or so.

So when we're talking about chemical abortion, this includes herbs, and it also includes the pills. And these are different ways of interrupting the hormonal and biochemical process of pregnancy by using other external substances and putting them into the body. So then the body has to

process those substances, which are often pretty irritating to our digestive system, our kidneys, our liver. And so we must process these chemicals, as well as process the pregnancy release and the actual tissue.

I'll take a pause there. That was a lot of information.

Amber: It's so good. I'm super grateful for having that larger view of the options.

Samantha: Yeah.

Amber: Yeah, and I will just put in really quickly for anyone who hasn't listened to Episode 73, that we do talk more about what you touched on with it. There's two aspects of it if you're doing it chemically: there's stopping the pregnancy, and then there's releasing the tissues.

Thank you so much. I just wish that I had had this framework earlier.

[0:47:59]

Samantha: Yeah. It's helpful, and I think, you know, we have to really respect how unique each of our lives are and each of our bodies.

And for some people, having a mechanical or a suction abortion with like the insertion of a speculum is a horribly traumatizing thing, and so they absolutely would prefer a chemical experience. And for other people, they would much rather have it be over really quickly and begin their repair and their regeneration without having to disrupt their digestive system and all of their organ systems in that way.

Just knowing that plant medicine, I want to be really clear also, it's like you don't have to poison yourself. That's also a misinformation around herbal abortion. It doesn't necessarily need to be poisoning. You're altering the biochemistry of your body with highly, highly estrogenic plants, which will counteract the progesterone that you need to promote a pregnancy.

I always remember progesterone as "pro-gestation," and so super estrogenic plants, highly oxytocic plants that can increase oxytocin, and then there are plants that inhibit progesterone, and there's lots of plants that irritate the mucous membranes in the entire body.

A lot of the plants that are expectorants are also really effective as emmenagogues, and that's a whole other distinction for folks to understand is the difference between emmenagogues and abortifacients.

So an emmenagogue is something that creates bleeding, menstrual bleeding, and not all emmenagogues are abortifacients, but all abortifacients are emmenagogues. It's kind of like a square-rectangle, conversation.

[0:49:58]

Amber: And what do they do that's different?

Samantha: Well, it really depends on the individual and the plant and the strength of the plant. And your guest on the other podcast did a really beautiful job of breaking down the different

biochemical actions of the plants. And a rapid fire version of that would be plants that are estrogenic, plants that are oxytocic, plants that inhibit progesterone, and plants that increase blood and circulation, and/or irritate the mucosa.

So endometrium is really similar in consistency to snot. And so things like red cedar, and things that contain the oil of [*audio unintelligible @ 0:50:52*], these things are really irritating to all of the mucosa in our body, which includes our endometrium.

And so the same plant used at a different time in our cycle, or whether we're pre-menstrual, or we have a delayed menstrual cycle that is not due to a pregnancy, used in a different quantity or in a different dosage of scheduling, like dosage or schedule, it can either stimulate healthy menstruation when our periods late because we're not pregnant, or it has the potential to expel a very early pregnancy. Like it is absolutely possible.

I'm learning who these plants are in our neighborhood, and how they work and developing relationships with them.

When we're in a non-emergent state, when we're really coming to them as a friend to develop a relationship, like sitting at their feet because they're our elders, and they're much more intelligent than us, is a step in the process that I find a lot of people who reach out to me in a panic, asking for natural abortion, and they mean herbal abortion advice, they haven't taken that step to become intimate with plants. And there's, yeah, just that conversation around consciousness and the reality that plants are not pills.

And so all of the different abortion options I want to, I provide education for people about all of the different options, they all can work, and they all do work in different levels of effectiveness for different individuals at different times, and really, really understanding our physiology, and the way that these different processes work, and that pregnancy is not an emergency.

I really, really, really want people to understand that even if you don't want a pregnancy, you know, and when you do want a pregnancy, and when you're having any kind of pregnancy release, like absolutely, there are some situations that become scary and dangerous, but generally speaking, pregnancy is not an emergency.

So really slowing down and taking the time to nourish ourselves, mind, body, and spirit, and when we're making choices to end or expel a pregnancy, understanding all of the different options that are available to us, and finding out what feels best to our bodies, or what feels best in our relationships in the context of our families, in the context of our lives in general, that there's not an unnatural and unnatural option.

There's really just what is the most integris for me as an individual, what has the most potential to be a healing experience, and that we absolutely have the ability to cultivate healing, transformative experiences with any of the options if we create that context, and have the support, and the right education.

[0:54:20]

Amber: Yeah, and I love kind of, bringing back something you said earlier, this idea of how different it can look when we are faced with this decision if we've already cultivated both our relationship with plants and our relationship with our own menstrual cycle.

Samantha: Yeah. I don't know if in your last interview, you talk about the fact that misoprostol is a stomach ulcer medication.

Amber: No, but I did want to talk about that today. Thank you so much. I would have forgotten about it.

So misoprostol, being one of the chemical ways to release a pregnancy, and again, for folks who haven't listened to the last one, I used herbs to stop my pregnancy, and then I used the misoprostol to expand the cervix and release the tissues.

And yeah, that's so interesting. Like so how does it work to... yeah, that's crazy.

Samantha: I wish I understood the biochemistry of it. All I know is that it contracts our smooth muscles, right? So the stomach is made of smooth muscle, your intestines, your uterus, your heart. And so a lot of people experience a lot of anxiety and a lot of vomiting and diarrhea along with their uterus opening when they take these pills.

If you have a what they call a medical abortion, and you go to the clinic, they will give you methergine in the clinic, which is an anti-cancer drug, not approved for the purpose of abortion by the FDA, that interferes with folic acid production and some other component I'm forgetting. But they give you an anti-cancer drug to chemically terminate the pregnancy, and then they send you home with misoprostol pills to expel the pregnancy...

Amber: Hey folks, so Samantha said the wrong word just there, and she emailed me after our conversation to correct it. She wrote me:

I mistakenly called the first drug given at the clinics prior to misoprostol "methergine" instead of the correct name, "mifepristone."

Methergine is one of the drugs I was given after my hemorrhage and procedure. It's a uterine contractor, used to prevent hemorrhage postpartum traditionally.

Mifepristone is the anti-cancer drug that interferes with both progesterone and folic acid. Mifepristone is what is replaced with herbs in a home herbs and misoprostol combo process to disrupt pregnancy biochemistry.

Samantha: ... And the process of expelling a pregnancy happens, I believe the stat is around 80% of the time with just the pills, the misoprostol pills, sorry. Just the process of moving the smooth muscles in your body expels the pregnancy, opens the body, creates the contractions effectively enough that the methergine is not completely necessary.

And what you practiced — which is really a wonderful practice that I've heard nothing but success stories from — is using plant medicine to help end the chemical pregnancy and then the pills to expel the physical pregnancy.

[0:57:51]

Amber: Yeah, and so what were you saying about getting the pills online?

Samantha: Oh yeah, right. So I would refer people to the website [PLAN C Pills](#), as well as the organization and the website called [If/When/How](#), as a really good source.

There's a great film called *Women on Waves* there. It's about a lady that was in the UN, and she used to sail outside of international waters with the pills around countries where abortion was illegal, and bring people out on the boat to have a visit with her, and then send them back home with the pills.

And that transitioned into Women on Web, which is another thing you can still look up with the goods. And Women on Web is like a massive international source of pills by mail, that last time I checked was not sending to the United States because technically abortion is still legal here, even though it's not very accessible for the vast majority of the population. It's really inaccessible, especially for people of color and lower economic status.

So Women on Web and Plan C Pills has like a report card, essentially, of several different sources of the pills online. You can also get misoprostol pills from a veterinarian. You can also get misoprostol pills as a licensed midwife. In many, many, many states it's used at full term labor, to stimulate labor and open the cervix sometimes.

And ah! I just want to name that like the fear body just moved into the room of like, “You can't tell the truth!” (*both laugh*) Ugh, but I'm doing it anyways.

[0:59:59]

Samantha: So yeah, all of this, you know, there are systems of regulation, and there are systems of false authority that have been persecuting people who know how to manage their fertility for a really long time.

And I just want to name that that just showed up for me, just sharing what I know to be absolutely true information and just that it's not... it feels unsafe still, like the witch wound is so intense, and that if you are sourcing the pills, online or anywhere besides from a medical clinic, who is prescribing them for the purpose of abortion, then you need to research your state laws.

Different state laws have different levels of seriousness. If you don't have a positive pregnancy test, the state has no proof that you are pregnant. So that's one thing. But yeah, it's a legal gray area that in some places could be a much more dangerous thing than others. So be aware, be careful, consider reaching out to If/When/How, which is a legal organization that can give you advice.

And I guess my biggest fear around the accessibility of the abortion pills on the internet is the encouragement of isolation. And I absolutely respect that, for many reasons, a lot of people are really motivated to keep their abortions a secret due to their family or cultural stigmas. And if at all

possible, I really, really encourage people to have a companion and to have support and to really actually tell as many people as possible so that they can help you and give you love.

Amber: And you'd be so surprised how many people you tell have been through it, too.

Samantha: Exactly and really honoring the postpartum period.

This is not, you know, a clinical, statistical piece of information, but my anecdotal wisdom and experience with abortion care is such that I see people who keep their abortions a secret from the people in their life, I see a lot more prolonged and excessive bleeding. And I just, yeah, the preventative care, the nourishing and the nurturing, the using postpartum care practices from different cultures throughout history, and giving yourself a 40 day period after your pregnancy release to integrate, to be eating mineral rich foods and staying extra warm, and just acknowledging the fact that, as we were discussing earlier, there are psychospiritual implications of this process.

There's a level of lucidity and vulnerability that can be a gift if we honor it in a healthy container, and can create suffering and discord if we don't honor it.

Amber: Yes, I would like to say for anyone who really does feel isolated, and like there's not a safe person in their life to talk to, that the Medicine Stories Facebook group has become a really gentle, safe, empowering, loving place for people to share their stories of abortion.

And it was seeing so many posts come through that group over the last year that finally gave me the courage to do these episodes. I had gone through it myself, I very much wanted to share about it, but I had big fear. And then just seeing post after post of women feeling isolated and scared and alone made me want to do these episodes.

Samantha: Yeah, I'm so, so grateful that you have.

[1:04:31]

Amber: Yes, and also, you know, you talked about half the states that with your positive pregnancy tests, like, you know, throw away your pregnancy test! Don't show the state, and you'll be fine.
(both laugh)

Also is it true? I remember reading that misoprostol is an over-the-counter medication in some states and that you can like get it at CVS or something.

Samantha: Umm. I'm pretty sure it is in Mexico.

Amber: Okay. Well, yeah. I couldn't wait. Yeah,

Samantha: Absolutely. Yes, it is.

Amber: Wait, it is in Mexico or is in some states here?

Samantha: Oh, not in the States. No, it's definitely not over-the-counter in the States. But I believe it is in Mexico, and I'm sure several other countries in the world.

Amber: Okay. Yeah, I went into a little independent pharmacy here and asked, and they really looked on the computer and tried, and they're like, "No," and it would be in California if it was available anywhere. So. Okay. Let's end on... thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Samantha: Yeah!

[1:05:36]

Amber: Okay, conscious contraception. This is a whole other area that you focus on. We did touch on Queen Anne's lace in the last episode. Tell me more.

Samantha: Yeah, well, I'm gonna do a shameless plug for my Patreon because I have a little booklet that hopefully will be published and available to the public later this winter. But meanwhile, the draft form is available on my Patreon page, and it's called *Please Bleed: Plants and Practical Magic for if You Accidentally Get Sperm in your Vagina*.

Amber: My favorite book title ever. *(both laugh)*

Samantha: Thank you. And so, in that work, you will find a basic one-on-one understanding of fertility awareness, and then an explanation of the process of conception and implantation, and then how plants can be used to interrupt implantation.

I have a... that book is a small excerpt from my Conscious Contraception skillshare, which is nine module long skillshare. I use "skillshare" instead of, you know, course or training, because I'm just like, these are my favorite skills that I've picked up along the way, for not being pregnant and having lots of sex.

And so I break down fertility awareness, the Sympto-Thermal Method of fertility awareness, how to use that as a practice of contraception, as well as how to heal your menstrual cycle so that you can even have regular ovulation, and a deep inquiry into that psycho-spiritual process of finding and embodying your sacred yes, so that it becomes a ritual that involves your consciousness when you avoid pregnancy. So you are really moving into this state of embodiment with your sexuality, where you're not making fear-based decisions around contraception, and you're moving with integrity, with the momentum and the energy of your ovulation and your menstruation and your orgasm, for that matter, and really focusing it on the outcome that you want.

And so, using fertility awareness as a foundation, and the basic, basic premise of that is "Do not put sperm in your vagina during your fertile window, and you will not get pregnant." *(both laugh)*

And sometimes there's an oops, and sometimes there's violence, also — we have to acknowledge that. But we're humans and sometimes we make mistakes, and there are ways that we can work with plant medicine to make sure that we menstruate. Instead of working with plants to cause an abortion, we can work with plants to encourage menstruation and to be moving in that sacred yes energy of "Yes! I want to ovulate. Yes, I want to menstruate!" instead of "No baby, no baby, no baby, no baby."

So my Conscious Contraception Skillshare, yeah, it goes through mind, body, and spirit for avoiding pregnancy, and I integrate Taoist and tantric and Kabbalah and all different types of philosophies

as ideas, right? It's this buffet of all of these different ways we can practice embodiment, cultivate our sexual and fertile energy, to create what we want instead of what we do not want, and plants are one of the tools.

[1:09:56]

Samantha: I really, really don't like the term "herbal birth control." I mean, I don't even like the term "birth control" at all. I really dislike the terms "birth" and "control" next to each other. I was a birth doula for over 10 years and controlling birth is kind of sadistic and really unhealthy and unnatural. You want to just support and be in awe of birth; you don't want to control it.

And usually when people say "birth control" what they mean is ovulation prevention, right? The vast, like, the majority of synthetic hormonal birth control on the market prevents ovulation; it doesn't really control birth. So what if we actually just called it what it is, right? Ovulation prevention pills, and like... I'm getting a little lost in there.

So yeah, the greater skillshare, The Conscious Contraception Skillshare, it's being revamped right now. You can sign up to be informed as soon as it is ready for re-release.

Amber: I love it. I love how you bring just such a wide lens to all of this. Really, we've talked on the podcast before and had a whole episode dedicated to fertility awareness method. And in the most recent episode talking about abortion, but those were really based on the physical, which is lovely and necessary, but I super appreciate how you expand that into such a bigger perception.

Samantha: Yes, it turns out we're hyperdimensional beings! Like our sexuality and fertility, in particular, are really potent portals where we can access spirit and divine.

Amber: Yep, and our own deepest selves and even our own like destiny and our path through this.

Samantha: Taoism associates desire with destiny in a really powerful, beautiful way that I appreciate

[1:12:14]

Amber: And you have another course, too, the Miscarriage and Abortion support, please tell us about that.

Samantha: Yeah, again, it's really giving equal play time, to mind, body, and spirit. And, you know, in all of my little books and courses I have in the introduction, like, "Hey, this is divided into mind, body, and spirit, but that division is an illusion. It's just a really convenient way to organize this material."

So the Miscarriage and Abortion Support Course, it walks you through all of the different types of abortion that I know of existing, and there's six of them, and it covers both in and out of clinic abortion options.

So it covers the suction in the clinic, manual vacuum aspiration, which can happen outside of the clinic as well, menstrual extraction, pills, and herbs, and it breaks down the anatomy and physiology of those processes in a really accessible way. It has custom diagrams of each of those

processes, and a long list of tips for care providers and support people and just kind of like a “what to expect” for each of those separate processes of ways to release a pregnancy.

And it really goes deeply into the commonalities between abortion and miscarriage, which I use this term “the universality of physiology,” which is this concept of the fact that our physical realities are universal, the physical realities of the womb, and the process of releasing a pregnancy, regardless of the tools that you use to release that pregnancy, it's a universal experience that has been happening forever.

And there really is this innate intelligence to the uterus of how to hold and release a pregnancy. Like, this is something our bodies know how to do. So anytime that we're using tools to encourage it to do that, or to force it to do that, as you could view it, that there is a potential that we can honor the innate wisdom of the womb, and be using those tools, as I was discussing with contraception before, that we're using external tools and using our will to encourage the innate wisdom of the body instead of interrupt it.

So yeah, mind, body and spirit, there's a lot of cross-cultural rituals for postpartum care, for grief, for death, that people can draw upon to craft their own rituals, and herbs and nutrition, an emotional toolkit, and doula skills. So it's a pretty robust offering, but the the goal is to provide support people and care providers of all modalities or just, you know, community care providers that care about the people in their communities that get pregnant, you know, to be able to be resourced to support somebody in mind, body and spirit through this process without bias and with an awareness of the physical reality.

One of the mantras that I encourage with pregnancy release support is “Address pain, prevent suffering.” So there are absolutely some aspects of miscarriage and abortion that are usually painful, often painful, but we can anticipate where the sights of pain are and there are pain coping tools that we can use, again, mind, body, and spirit. We're using tools to support people and transform their pain and prevent them from suffering.

Amber: It's such a needed work. I'm so grateful for it. I know that so many people who hear this are going to feel called to move into this work and educate themselves so that they can be of service when someone needs them, and this is how it works. You know, one person educates others, they educate others, you've created beautiful tools, you have some books as well available.

Samantha: Yes, I have a *Holistic Healing After Abortion*, and *Holistic Healing After Miscarriage* book available, both physical and digital forms. And that's kind of like the tiny, that's the mini summary version of the course. The course actually came after those little books.

And then my *Mapping the Yoni-verse* coloring book is so much fun. And that is really the 101 education that I would like to give to everybody who's got a womb and a vagina. Like this is the 101, basic information about our fertile and sexual bodies that I really want everyone to know. And it goes through the physical anatomy, as well as energy anatomy, according to Tao, Tantra, and Kabbalah.

Amber: I'm looking at it on the website right now and realizing like, oh, I need to get this for my teenager and myself.

Samantha: Yeah!

Amber: There are already things that I don't know. And I feel like I know a lot.

Samantha: Yeah, it's really sweet.

I had Carol Downer edit it, which was a really amazing honor. For folks that don't know Carole Downer is one of the inventors of menstrual extraction, and a co-author and editor of the book, *A New View of a Woman's Body*, which is a really, really essential text for reclaiming our health, and DIY gynecology, in general. It's still one of the best books out there. Unfortunately, I'm like, can we do better? Can we update? But that's really the one.

[1:18:52]

Amber: Okay. I feel like we've done it. (*Amber laughs*)

Samantha: We did it!

Amber: Yeah, we've at least planted a seed, and you've clarified some things for me, we've expanded on some of what we talked about in the last episode, and hopefully, sent a lot of people in your direction to deepen into this work.

So I just cannot say enough about how thankful I am to you, Samantha.

Samantha: Likewise, I just am very, very grateful for your body of work, and how incredibly curious and open your heart and mind seem to stay throughout all of the different ways that you explore, and, yeah, I'm very genuinely honored to be able to converse with you and share some of what I know and think with your audience.

[1:20:05]

(*Samantha sings*)

*Many fear my power
My power, it's divine
The church and state can't regulate what lies between my thighs.
Oh, the shores of humankind
Oh, the shores of humankind*

*On your knees
On your knees
All who answer must be on their knees
On their knees
To worship at the shrine*

*Oh, the shores of humankind
Oh, the shores of humankind*

*Oh, witch
I'm a witch
I'm a witch
I am pure magic
I bleed, and I don't die*

*Oh, the shores of humankind
Oh, the shores of humankind*

*Many fear my power
My power, it's divine*

(Exit Music: acoustic guitar folk song "Wild Eyes" by Mariee Sioux)

[Closing]

[1:23:27]

Amber: Thank you for taking these Medicine Stories in. I hope they inspire you to keep walking the mythic path of your own unfolding self. I love sharing information and will always put any relevant links in the show notes. You can find past episodes, my blog, handmade herbal medicines, and a lot more at [MythicMedicine.love](https://www.mythicmedicine.com). We've got reishi, lion's mane, elderberry, mugwort, yarrow, redwood, body oils, an amazing sleep medicine, heart medicine, earth essences, so much more, more than I can list there. [MythicMedicine.love](https://www.mythicmedicine.com).

While you're there, check out my quiz "[Which Healing Herb is your Spirit Medicine?](#)" It's fun and lighthearted, but the results are really in-depth and designed to bring you into closer alignment with both the medicine you are in need of and the medicine that you already carry that you can bring to others.

If you love this show, please consider supporting my work at [Patreon.com/MedicineStories](https://www.patreon.com/MedicineStories). It is so worth your while. There are dozens and dozens of killer rewards there, and I've been told by many folks that it's the best Patreon out there. We've got e-books, downloadable PDFs, bonus interviews, guided meditations, giveaways, resource guides, links to online learning, and behind-the-scenes stuff and just so much more. The best of it is available at the two-dollar a month level. Thank you.

And please subscribe in whatever app you use, just click that little subscribe button and review on iTunes. It's so helpful, and if you do that you just may be featured in a listener spotlight in the future.

The music that opens and closes the show is Mariee Sioux. It's from her beautiful song "Wild Eyes." Thank you, Mariee.

And thanks to you all. I look forward to next time!

[1:25:45]