

[Book Journeys Author Interview](#) - Apr. 6, 2017

Jenn McRobbie with Ilia Blandina, author of *Give Birth a Chance: How to Prepare for an Empowered VBAC*.

“Actually, the book will write itself.” ~Ilia Blandina

Jenn:

Welcome, welcome, welcome to another episode of Book Journeys Radio. Every week, on Book Journeys Radio, we speak to accomplished authors who've gone from just having an idea for a book to a finished book, ready to make a difference in the world. It's April 6th, and today is one of my favorite Thursdays, because we just had a red carpet launch at the Author Castle in the Washington, D.C. area, and even though we had tornado warnings and crazy thunderstorms, it is now ridiculously beautiful outside, just in time for us to hear from today's author. Today's author is Ilia Blandina. She is a certified nurse midwife and advanced registered nurse practitioner, and she is the owner and founder of Awaken Your Life Power, Inc. Ilia wrote the book *Give Birth a Chance: How to Prepare for an Empowered VBAC*. Welcome to the show, Ilia!

Ilia:

Aw, thanks for having me, Jenn! I love doing radio shows, it's - it's fun, exciting,

Jenn:

Good! Well, I'm so happy to have you here and I'm so happy for you to be able to share your message with our listeners, so just to start, can you tell the listeners what your book is about and who it's for?

Ilia:

Excellent! Well, as Jenn said, I - I'm a nursing midwife. I have retired from a - doing actual deliveries and I put all my energy in trying to educate women and their birth attendants - primarily doulas, but also midwives or nurses - all about how to empower women to have a - a - the birth that they - they really dream about, and some of my areas of expertise is vaginal birth after C-section, which is what VBAC stands for, and how the bir - the book was born was - I - I was in South Florida and - and that's where I did most of my practicing, and the C-section in South Florida were - has been upwards of sixty-eight percent in some households, and this is ...

-

Jenn:

Wow!

Ilia:

- a real number that is documented in consumer reports that anyone can look it up. It's not my number. I - it's what was actually the catalyst for the writing the book, because there were some

local midwives that protested, ... went in front of the hospital and with a sign, and I went, "What?" And why it's so important for me is that I've been in practice with physicians that, because of malpractice fears and what-have-you, they don't offer vaginal birth after C-section anymore, and I ... actually succumbed to practicing ... their way, which is not offering that to my clients, and that's what actually almost literally broke my heart and - and made me burn out. But where it really hits home is that, I, myself, with my Baby Number Four, he was a - a VBAC, he was a vaginal birth after Caesarean, because Baby Number Three was a C-section because at that time I was living in Georgia and - and my doctor there that was backup for my midwife, didn't know how to do a - a - a breech delivery -

Jenn:
Oh.

Ilia:
- even though I - I'd given birth vaginally before, two times.

Jenn:
Right.

Ilia:
So, in the big scenario things, I'm ... the perfect candidate for a VBAC, which means I was healthy, strong, no medical problems and I had already had two previous births, so it's ... - had downed me, so But having - being the ideal candidate for a VBAC at that time, in 2003, I still - the pendulum was swinging ... back towards not having VBAC as an option, and so, I actually had to - first of all, I'm - I'm the kinda nurse, midwife that - I've always had midwives taking care of me. I - I don't have - even though I worked for doctors and I worked in the hospitals and stuff like that, I did that out of how it was structured, because of my big family and what have you, but I, myself, as a client, I always want out-of-hospital births and the natural way, from the very beginning. My first baby was born 1988.

Jenn:
Right.

Ilia:
So, way before everything. So, the point being

Jenn:
"Way before everything." Not that long ago, Ilia.

Ilia:
Way before everything. Way before everything. And - in my world. ... my point is, I was - I was a midwife in the s - in the business, actively in the business, and - also a consumer, or a client, in

the business at the same time, and I knew all the players. I knew all the people. And it was still hard to find support. ... as a general support I would get, "Are you sure you wanna do that?"

Jenn:
Right.

Ilia:
All well - well-intentioned, I get it. N - no, for all the people who were hearing me, know me, if - I get it, but I did find that - it so hard, and luckily, because I am in - in the - behind the scenes -

Jenn:
Right.

Ilia:
- I knew the people to call that would be supportive, and in the end, I ended up having what now people have coined an HBAC, which is a homebirth after Caesarean. Yeah!

Jenn:
Oh! Fancy! So, that's not your - your home airconditioning system, it's something different.

Ilia:
No. No. And - and ... you gonna find a very polarizing, very, ... "Oh, what is this," or "What is that," or "This is not safe," and what have you, and my mission - my mission, when I saw that sixty-eight percent were C-sections and another hospital was fifty-nine percent.

Jenn:
Wow! Wow!

Ilia:
And you guys can look it up on consumer reports, it's - there's no - ... this is not a hidden fact.
....

Jenn:
No, it's not!

Ilia:
No. I suddenly knew - I knew that women were not getting complete informed consent and were not being told that their bodies are normal and you can have a baby. Your bodies ... have a baby.

Jenn:
Right.

Ilia:

And - and - yeah, okay. Someone'll come in and say, "Yeah, but what if the uterus breaks open and - and ... it's catastrophic." Well. If you read my book, I cover that area.

Jenn:

Good. I'm glad to hear that.

Ilia:

So, yeah, it's the biggest fear. And fear, let's put it this way - FEAR. False evidence appearing real, okay?

Jenn:

Yeah.

Ilia:

And you could twist the facts all over the place. So, here's the deal. A uterus that breaks open along a previous scar, which, if it's the right kind of scar, it's - you have less likely ... it's gonna break open, one.

Jenn:

Right.

Ilia:

But if it does break open - if it does break open along the scar, there's not gonna be as much bleeding because it's going ... along the scar, and in fact, many times, ... you could see that happening, ... even ... okay, they went into labor, it didn't progress, and then you end up with a repeat C-section, and, "Oh, wow, look, there's a window on -" they call it a "window" on the uterus.

Jenn:

A window.

Ilia:

It was already separating. But there was no blood because there's scar tissue there and scar tissue doesn't have blood. On the other hand, your - it's your first baby, guess what? You still have a risk of your uterus rupturing.

Jenn:

No matter what.

Ilia:

No matter what. No matter what. Do you - did they tell you that before you had C-sec - pregnant?

Jenn:
No!

Ilia:
Of course, not. Because

Jenn:
Of course, not. I have two kids, I didn't know that!

Ilia:
Yeah! And I've had four, I didn't know that! ... if you know - I studied, and it was ... only until recently, when they did some really big study and they really looked at, "Okay, whose uteruses are breaking and ... why and when, what have you, and they found that you're as much likely to have a ruptured uterus with your first baby as you are with vaginal birth after C-section.

Jenn:
Really? So, the risk isn't greater, after a Caesarean.

Ilia:
No! No. No. It's more catastrophic with your first baby.

Jenn:
Of course. Of course.

Ilia:
Why? Because there's no scar tissue there, and when it breaks open, it's pure blood vessels breaking open. Okay?

Jenn:
Wow.

Ilia:
Now, how often does it happen, right? How often does it happen.

Jenn:
Yeah, how often does it happen?

Ilia:
Maybe it's one chance in ... one thousand four hundred after C-section.

Jenn:
Wow.

Ilia:

And it's a little bit higher - ... have the numbers in my book, but here's the twist on it all. The procedure that is offered, like water.

Jenn:

Yes.

Ilia:

... when you go to a spa.

Jenn:

Right.

Ilia:

... I'm really passionate about this, so I get really metaphoric, and I Go - I ... people out of the water sometimes and - and I'm sorry if I hit a nerve, but here. When you go to a spa and they ... just give you water all the time, ... every time you turn around, you're given water.

Jenn:

You're given wa - right. Exactly.

Ilia:

Right? ... you could have a water in your hand and you're given water, right?

Jenn:

Right.

Ilia:

Okay. The procedure that they do, that they offer all the time, and - is - is - ...? I'm testing you.

Jenn:

I'm - I'm assuming the procedure you're talking about -

Ilia:

.... Ready?

Jenn:

Yes.

Ilia:

It's amniocentesis.

Jenn:
Oh!

Ilia:
Amniocentesis. Amniocentesis is when they take a needle. It's - it's pretty basic, tell you, it's pretty basic. ... say, "We've done thousands of that. We put a needle, we get the fluid around the baby, we do the tests" and what have you and wherever, and guess what ... what's your chance of having a problem after amniocentesis.

Jenn:
I - ... I know there is a chance, but I don't know the percentage chance. Here it is.

Ilia:
... depending on where - what you read, in

Jenn:
Of course.

Ilia:
Ready? It's anywhere from one in two hundred chance of a problem or one in four hundred chances.

Jenn:
So, that's a lot higher risk than having a uterine rupture!

Ilia:
Oh, isn't that amazing?

Jenn:
Wow! That is amazing. And you're right, that's such a common test, especially with ... so many of us choosing to get pregnant later in life.

Ilia:
I was thirty-five and I was forty-one with my last - I did not have amniocentesis. Why? Because I knew the numbers!

Jenn:
Right!

Ilia:
And what's the value of the information? If the value of the information is that, "Yeah, you would use that information to terminate your pregnancy" and what have you and whatever, ... that's your right and that's fine, but that's not in my - in my wheelhouse of value.

Jenn:
Right.

Ilia:
So, I'm ... - and but ... out there in the world, the medical leader - legal culture is that, if you don't help someone have a perfect baby, and - and that - even me, it's ... genetically perfect -

Jenn:
Right.

Ilia:
- that you're gonna be sued.

Jenn:
That's so sad.

Ilia:
And it's sad. And - see, it's sad from both sides, okay?

Jenn:
... it really is.

Ilia:
... doctors and midwives are there because they love their profession, they love giving a hand, and yet their hands are tied by consumers who are Hell-bent on, "It has to be perfect." Well, this book is all about, "It's not gonna be perfect."

Jenn:
Right. Nothing can be!

Ilia:
Nothing can be, one, and two, kids ... will be perfect, because if you say it's gonna be perfect, if you intend it, if you manifest it, it

Jenn:
Love that.

Ilia:
If you follow your gut, if you have open communication, if you trust your body, if - if your practitioner trusts you, if you ... - whatever you trust in the Universe, you trust in God, you trust in - whoever you trust in -

Jenn:
Right.

Ilia:
- that's an outer - there is an outer force that has created us. It's - it's put stuff in there, too, about that.

Jenn:
Right.

Ilia:
... ancestors. Your ancestors are there with you. The book starts with a chapter on your ancestors and how you can - how you can reach out to the ancestors. I'm talking here, grandmother's grandmother's grandmother who gave birth and you wouldn't be in the lineage if they hadn't trusted themselves and they - we did it ... beach!

Jenn:
Right!

Ilia:
Coconut water!

Jenn:
Exactly!

Ilia:
Okay? So -

Jenn:
So - and here's the thing, Ilia, ... as you know, patients, clients, ... women who are having babies, we don't know these things, but what I'm hearing you say is that there are a lot of people that are ... actively helping, but also don't know the risk factors, or - or - or the risk tolerance or anything.

Ilia:
Yes! ... they may know the risk factors, but some people's hands are tied.

Jenn:
Right.

Ilia:
Some - some - there's such a thing as hospitals banning VBAC.

Jenn:
Really?

Ilia:
... some hospitals that don't do VBAC.

Jenn:
Wow.

Ilia:
So, now you - now wo - now, the woman has to find a provider that does a VBAC and - and a - a place to do it in, so, someone in her ... VBACs at home. And then, ... argument is, "Oh, is that safe?" and blah, blah, blah. There's so much, and - her - here's the bottom line, and I think the tide is starting to turn. And the - why it's ... - and I know it's divinely - divinely orchestrated.

Jenn:
Right.

Ilia:
Why do I know it's divinely orchestrated? I'll tell you why. I saw a consumer reports I said, "I have to write the book." I knew about Angela, all right?

Jenn:
Right.

Ilia:
I wrote - I got on her team. She helped me write the book. The book came out ... - initially came out on - on the Kindle through Amazon, in December 15, 2016.

Jenn:
Yup.

Ilia:
Now, we're getting ready for the - the print book, this - within the next year.

Jenn:
So excited.

Ilia:
Okay. So, that - December, 2016, right? February 2017. ACOs came out with their latest ... statement, and they actually put in - there's two things that they put in there about - miraculously, in perfect timing with this book. One. If a woman is normal, leave her alone in labor. Don't touch her. Don't keep doing stuff to her.

Jenn:
Right.

Ilia:
I'm - I'm ... it down, okay? They - you could look it up, I'll - I'll - I'll get a link, whatever. The point is, don't do anything to her. That's big! You know why it's big? 'Cause I used to work in a hospital that, in their protocol, they had you check - do a vaginal exam every two hours, and I kept having to battle, as a midwife. And then, sometimes I worked there as a nurse who - ... I wish I - I kept having to argue and be called to the carpet. When they do an audit of my charts, "Why - why haven't you checked every two hours?" Why must I need to check every two hours?

Jenn:
Why do I need to, right!

Ilia:
Because - to know if she's gonna deliver, I'm, ... "Listen, I - I know -" Okay. "She knows when she's gonna deliver! We can't be hanging out in her vagina every two hours! What is wrong with you people? Having to ... increase ... of infection and all that." Oh, but this and that - they have their reasons. They have their reasons.

Jenn:
Right.

Ilia:
But now, ACOs has come out. Is she normal and healthy, which most women are. Leave her alone. Please, leave her alone.

Jenn:
Wow, that's fantastic. Huge.

Ilia:
It's huge! ... huge. February 2017! My book came out ... December 2016. Okay? I was inspired in spring of 2016. Okay? This is God. This is God.

Jenn:
Right.

Ilia:
Number two. ACOs has said, "If at all possible, we recommend that every woman who delivers should have one-to-one care."

Jenn:
Oh, wow!

Ilia:
Ready? Ready? "At least in the form of having a doula present."

Jenn:
Wonderful!

Ilia:
Okay? So, in other words, hey, hospitals! If you can't have one-to-one care with your nurse:patient ratio, then you'd better start ha - making the door open to do it.

Jenn:
Wow, love that!

Ilia:
Okay? Those two things! Those two things, huge! In February 2017. Meanwhile, as you will be able to see in my book, I've been ... studying the last - since 2011, while I - while I wanted to - actually doing active deliveries, I've been studying a form of energy psychology called Emotional Freedom Technique and Matrix Reimprinting. And what that does for the birth community - because I used it while I was practicing. And what it does for the birth community - and if we can get this knowledge as a basic tool for everyone to be able to use, is that you can eliminate fear.

Jenn:
Right.

Ilia:
Fear all the way down to, not only the present fear that's running amok in your brain right this second, all right?

Jenn:
Right.

Ilia:
But also the fear that's been imbedded in your personal belief system, whether or not - one, if you're the - the mom who's pregnant - of whether or not you can trust your body, okay?

Jenn:
Right.

Ilia:

Or, two - and here's - here's a - a biggie, the second one, is, it can help the practitioner, who has gone through caring for a woman who, for whatever reason, it was a traumatic birth experience, 'cause, really, the -

Jenn:

Right.

Ilia:

The normal - the normal person, the normal pregnant mom, ... she's not gonna go through a traumatic thing, or that she - first she feels it's traumatic. It's a little bit - it - it's traumatic in her own way, and she still has to deal with her negative emotions around it.

Jenn:

Of course. Of course.

Ilia:

But - but - but, when you talk to me, where I have, under my belt, over five thousand deliveries, I can tell you some real horror stories. I'm not gonna tell you. I'm not gonna tell you because I don't wanna give you secondary trauma.

Jenn:

Right!

Ilia:

So, you think that I've had secondary trauma as a practitioner?

Jenn:

Oh, I'm sure!

Ilia:

.... You think that what I've experienced as a practitioner has ... - little bit, has - has - has changed my view for the next baby that I go to deliver?

Jenn:

I'm certain.

Ilia:

Okay? I'm talking, this is really big.

Jenn:

Wow.

Ilia:

This is - this is more than just me, this is more than just the book. This is

Jenn:

Well -

Ilia:

Read my book to its entirety, you'll find out that, in the end, if we keep increasing the rate of C-sections, that's gonna bypass all of our normal way of getting our immune system to trust our functioning, which is getting - ... through the vagina.

Jenn:

Wow.

Ilia:

So, this is big.

Jenn:

Wow. It is big, and - and I know that, beyond your book, ... - something now that's come out of your book that I - I want you to talk about a little bit, before we run out of time, is, how you're taking this message and - and spreading it. So, what it - will you need from the listeners to help you get this message out?

Ilia:

... Everyone - everyone, listen up. First of all, get a pen and a paper, write this number down. It's my phone number. 305-771-5052. I need to talk to as many doulas out there as possible. If you're a doula, call me. If you know someone who's a doula, give them my number and have them call me. I am doing market research because I am about to launch a program that's gonna teach doulas on how to get rid of the fear factor in the birth venue, okay? And how to help their clients get rid of that fear factor, okay? The fear's gotta go. It's gotta go. So, I'm gonna repeat it again. 305-771-5052. The reason I'm ... my phone number is, time is of the essence. I cannot sit here and play the e-mail game with you. We need to talk right away. I need to know what your challenges are, out there in the birth community right this second, so I can make sure to implement it in my program. I know what I need to implement. I know chopping, I know - make ..., but I wanna be able to really apply it to what's physically going on, moment by moment, out there. The only way I'm gonna get that information is from you, out there, i - who's listening to me and it doesn't matter if you're listening on a replay, because my phone number has been my phone number forever, so ... get my answering machine, if you get my answering machine, 305-771-5052. You get my answering machine, no biggie, I will call you back. I will. And we will have a talk, so I can - so we can implement this, because my mission - and I really think it's - it's God who put me on this mission, ... really do - is to help educate how to handle all the spheres about childbirth so we can bring the C-section rate back to normal, which i - ...

nationwide, it's around thirty-two percent. World Health Organization recommends that it should be at fifteen percent.

Jenn:

Wow, we're way above - yeah.

Ilia:

Let's get back to normal, let's trust our bodies, ACOs is behind us, it's all evidence-based, by the way. Teachings that I - that I do -

Jenn:

Of course.

Ilia:

So, please call me, call me, call me.

Jenn:

... and thank you for - for sharing that, Ilia, and I - I just want to reiterate to all of our listeners that if you're a doula or a midwife or a - ... even a woman who is just really passionate, like Ilia is, about being able to make the decision yourself, to have a VBAC or just a vaginal birth if it's your first one, in lieu of a C-section, that you should call Ilia and reach out to her, because she is on a mission. I can feel the fire coming off of you!

Ilia:

... I know, I get really hot.

Jenn:

It's great! I love it! I love when our authors are so passionate about helping people that they - ... they - they can't - they can barely separate themselves from their clients. It's a wonderful, wonderful thing.

Ilia:

Absolutely, and I - I completely enjoy it and - and it's just - we gotta turn it around, We have to.

Jenn:

Yeah. Yeah. ... so, I cannot believe - it feels like we just started speaking to each other, and we only have ... three minutes left.

Ilia:

Amazing.

Jenn:

So, before - I know! Before our time goes, so, if there's somebody out there listening, Ilia, who has a really strong message like you do, but they don't know how to get it out there, what's your advice to them?

Ilia:

Oh, my gosh! ... working with the Author Incubator and Angela has really been a Godsend to me, because her - the process really - once I got the word of God that said, "You gotta write this book," and I'm ... "Really? Are you serious? Who am I to write this book?" Well, luckily, I had her in my Rolodex, so here's a cue, put her in your Rolodex, sign your - sign yourself up, at least get her - her e-mail, ... hysterical. But she finally got me. I met - I've been on her e-mail list since 2011 and I'm so glad that I was, because, when I finally got the word of God to say - ... said, "You're gonna write this book," she was to go to. And - and - and she - she actually helped my mentor also write her book, so, ... - so, it's ... a - a generational line of

Jenn:

Wonderful!

Ilia:

Yeah! Yeah. So,

Jenn:

Oh, I love that! I didn't know that, Ilia, that's great!

Ilia:

Yeah! Yeah. Alina Frank, by the way, I'm plugging her, 'cause she - I love her. Anyway - but the - the point is - is - ... I have stories that I had to work through about being able to write - yeah, ... yeah, I have a Master's degree and what have you, but I've had interesting horror stories about being put down for how I wrote, or I didn't know how to write and what have you, and ... -

Jenn:

Right.

Ilia:

- energetically, but the whole process just really gets you where you need to be and - and actually, the book will write itself.

Jenn:

Oh. Ilia, that's the best. The book wrote itself, everyone. So, Ilia, thank you so much for being on the show and for sharing your passion with me and the Author Incubator and all of our listeners.

Ilia:

Yes!

Jenn:

If you want to find more from Ilia, find her on Amazon, go right now, download *Give Birth a Chance: How to Prepare for an Empowering VBAC*, and then pick up the phone and call 305-771-5052 and talk to Ilia about your experiences, because you, too, can be part of this movement that Ilia has built, to bring - to empower women to have the birth of their choice. Thank you so much.

Ilia:

Thank you. Give birth a chance, yes.

Jenn:

“And give birth a chance.” That’s right! Join me next week, with another episode of Book Journeys Radio.

