


Submission no. 396AUTHORISED: 20/6/07 **Subject: Breastfeeding Story**

I struggled tremendously with breastfeeding. I had been very adamant that I would breastfeed and had done a lot of reading and talking to people. I felt that because my mother had easily breastfed 4 kids I would have no problems. One of the hardest things was the way that every different midwife in the hospital had a different suggestion or technique. Initially everything seemed to be going well; or so I thought until I ended up with badly cracked nipples as a result of incorrect attachment. Attachment that had been checked by the midwives in hospital. A number of times I would ask a midwife to check the attachment and they would just take the baby off and attach her themselves; this did nothing to teach me what was correct. The lactation consultant in the hospital did not see me until day 4 and simply showed a video.

I continued to battle on and had a lactation consultant come to my home that day after coming home from hospital. She suggested, I express and feed from a bottle until my nipples had recovered. So that pattern continued of feeding for a few days, damage would occur and make it so painful to feed that I would express and bottle feed.

I ended up by 3 months only breast feeding the first feed of the day and then expressing the rest of the day and having to top up with formula. By 4 months, I was exhausted; I would try and breastfeed and she would for maybe 2 mins, then bottle feed breast milk, then bottle feed formula, then express for the next feed. As she grew to demand more, my supply did not keep up. I tried a number of different ways to increase my supply but eventually I gave up.

I found the whole process very upsetting and tried to not give up for as long as possible. This was just as hard. There is such pressure to breastfeed and it really is hard. There needs to be much better consistency in the information given. Antenatal classes need to have hands on advice about breastfeeding; even actual demos not just a video. And use little babies, a lot of videos have older babies to demonstrate how to feed...this is entirely unrealistic for new parents and increases the pressure of "why isn't my baby just doing what the one on the video did". In hospital lactation consultants need to see mothers straight away, and midwives need to be much gentler and broader with their assistance. Not "this is the way" but "here are a variety of ways". I think fathers need to have more information and involvement in the process. Our lactation consultant was great in showing my husband how he could help. Most of all there needs to be better public awareness; I am embarrassed using a bottle, I have been criticised by mothers in parents rooms at shopping centres; it is not easy for everyone. And just because you really really want it to work doesn't mean that it will!

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