

Submission no. 416AUTHORISED: 20/6/07 **My story:**

I always intended on breastfeeding my baby. I bought not a single bottle, teat or tin of formula. I didn't even contemplate using formula. I went to a breastfeeding class and was raring to go. Unfortunately breastfeeding my child was not successful. My milk supply was minimal and my child began to lose weight. I sought advise from child health nurses, my gp, my paediatrician, two lactation consultants, friends and family. On medical advise I introduced "top ups" of formula as her weight was declining. I tried so hard and perservered through cracked and bleeding nipples, I expressed and took tablets to increase the milk supply and still no success. I did everything that everyone told me to do and it just didn't work for me.

The guilt attached to not being able to successfully nurture and feed my child and the distress this caused myself and my husband was great. I tried so hard and at times felt like a failure as a mother not being able to do this.

It took me a lot of support from my friends and family and the fact that when we introduced formula to my child, she started to put on weight, not to feel like a failure. I found it very hard initially to deal with this feelings, on top of the day to day pressure of being a first time Mum. It was about putting the needs of my child as number one and putting my emotions as number two.

What would have made breastfeeding easier for me:

1. Consistent advise from midwives in the hospital. We went private and every midwife that came in would tell us a different thing (the paediatrician at the hospital would also tell us a different thing). The hospital was so busy that no one appeared to have time to sit down with us and show me what to do. We asked for a lactation consultant on numerous occassions, however there was only one and she was so busy that in my five day stay (I asked each day), she never turned up. So after five days of being in hospital, I still had no idea on what to do and I couldn't wait to get out of hospital.
2. More affordable or free lactation consultants that come to your home. I had a lactation consultant come to our home however she was \$70 per hr and this is really not affordable.
3. The breastfeeding clinic at our local child health clinic was excellent. We went to the Alderly Clinic and met with Nicki the health nurse and she was excellent, very supportive and took the time to show us attachment and talk to us about feeding.
4. A change in societies values and the health profession that if you don't breastfeed you aren't a failure as a mother. It was when my child started to lose weight that health professionals had the attitude of "well of course you need to include formula, as your baby is losing weight", however before that, they all kept saying keep on trying with the breastfeeding it will just happen. When I had mentioned formula to them, they had the attitude of that is not a good thing, and spoke about it in an unhealthy manner, so when I had to introduce formula, I already had that image in my back of my mind, so this added to my guilt. Health professionals need to be holistic and promote breastfeeding, however also have a healthy attitude to using formula if breastfeeding does not work.
5. More affordable equipment to assist with breastfeeding. I spent a fortune on nipple cream, expressing machine, nipple shields etc. This list goes on!!