

I gave up breastfeeding when my daughter was only 3 weeks old. I mean, I continued to breastfeed occasionally until 9 weeks, but from then on it was all bottles.

Breastfeeding is painful. It hurts. It's also hard to deal with the looks of disgust from some people when you begin to feed... not that it particularly worried me, but I know it worries some other women. The thing is, you can't really win... breastfeeding and bottlefeeding seem to mean a lot in the world of mothering, and I believe that breastfeeding women are seen as superior by mothers, but disgusting by the general public.

I regret having given up on breastfeeding so easily. I only did it because everyone kept commenting on how I fed my daughter. I had her at 19. She was unplanned, and I only had a small amount of time prepare for a baby. I hadn't given 2 thoughts to ANYTHING regarding babies until I was pregnant... and I definitely didn't feel confident about being a mother. I felt even less confident after I had an unwanted caesarean... it made me feel like my body didn't work the way it was supposed to... and so I was much more sensitive than usual.

My daughter breastfed for a long time. Sometimes I'd feed, continuously, for an hour or more. It never bothered me... I thought that's what babies did. One day though, I was visiting my Grandparents. I went upstairs to breastfeed (my Grandparents didn't feel comfortable seeing me do it), and when I came down, I was shocked.

There, waiting at the bottom of the stairs for me, were my father and my grandmother. It was as if they were staging an intervention. They told me how they didn't think I was feeding my daughter correctly, that I was taking too long, that I was setting her up for bad habits, and that it was my job to cut her off after 15 minutes. Apparently, she'd soon learn that she had only 15 minutes to suck as much as she could, so she wouldn't lazily sip, like they believed she was currently doing.

I didn't believe them about the 15 minute thing. She was only a few weeks old, and I thought it was rubbish.

Still, them confronting me made me question myself. I didn't feel confident AT ALL regarding my choices, and began to wonder if I was doing it wrong.

One night when I couldn't get my daughter to sleep, my mother suggested we try a bottle. I didn't want to, but my already bruised and battered esteem made me agree... and that night, she slept straight away and lasted until morning. It made me believe that my milk must have been worthless... that this formula could do what I could not. It made DD satisfied and it made her sleep... so I switched.

I never thought anyone could make me feel so PATHETIC as a parent that I would just cave in and do whatever anyone suggested... but that's how it was with breastfeeding.

Stacey De Villiers, Qld