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Hi my name is Christine Stavrakis and I have 3 children- Georgia (8), Jordan (7) and Jackson (14 months).

I am one of those mothers who found breastfeeding to be an absolute and utter nightmare. I did not successfully feed any of my children and consider it to be one of my biggest 'failures' in life. I would honestly go through labour again rather than breastfeed- that's how profound and deep the wound of breastfeeding is for me.

When I was pregnant with Georgia I had all good intentions of breastfeeding. I just considered it a natural and wonderful part of the process of becoming a mother. From the first time I tried to put her on the breast she could not attach properly (she was fairly small at 2.5 kgs) and I had cracked and bleeding nipples from day one. There was nothing worse than trying to put a baby on your nipple when it felt like razorblades slicing through you all the time. I tried in vain to attach her properly, the midwives tried but it just wasn't working for either me or the baby. She was crying because she was so hungry but couldn't get anything from me and I was crying because I couldn't supply her with nourishment.

When she was a couple of days old I presented an hysterical child and mother to the Royal Women's Hospital (in Vic) and spent a day at the Breastfeeding Clinic. They tried their best, but they didn't have any success either. I hadn't realised how technical and scientific breastfeeding had become. I was shown different holds, techniques etc and felt like I had failed some major degree course. In my naivety, I had just assumed that breastfeeding was the most natural thing in the world and all I had to do was bring the baby to my breast and she would also know what to do.

Having lost all my confidence, it got to the point where I would start sweating around half an hour before a feed and be stressed to the max before I had to go through the torture again. I could not even attempt it unless I had my husband or sister holding my breast and trying to get the baby to attach. I tried nipple shields, contraptions to bring out my nipples more and any other technique/method that was advised to me- all to no avail.

In the end I expressed for 3 weeks and by that stage my milk had just about dried up due to the enormous stress of the situation. It didn't help that everyone in my mother's group was breastfeeding and asking why I wasn't. Other people also made comments.

With my second baby, I had exactly the same problems though Jordan was marginally better at attaching on one nipple. Again I expressed for 3 weeks and then put him on formula.

With my third, Jackson, I thought I would prepare myself really well, so I read up on breastfeeding, watched videos, went to breastfeeding classes and even saw a lactation consultant (who thought it was strange because I hadn't given birth yet). I felt that I was that much older (40) and as prepared as I possibly could be.

The disappointment was even worse the third time around than it was the first time. However, this time I didn't put myself through the torture of beating myself up as much as I had the first 2 times. I had my cry in the hospital and sent my husband to get me some formula and bottles.

All my kids are happy and healthy and I am truly blessed to have them. Even though I still feel like the biggest failure that a mother can be and stare with an obsessive wonder at women who are breastfeeding, I have accepted that it does not work for everyone- though sometimes I still wonder if I could have done something different or persevered a little longer.

I hope my story helps alleviate the grief of other mothers who have been unable to enjoy breastfeeding their babies.

Kind regards,

Christine