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Breastfeeding – Handling Criticism

By **Patty Hone**

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Feelings about how to parent seem to shift with every generation. A new way of parenting, sometimes called attachment parenting, has emerged and it challenges many of the rigid teachings of our mother's generation. Although breastfeeding is on the rise now, women are still dealing with the repercussions of previous generations. Not too long ago mainstream women did not breastfeed at all and the ones that did were taught to follow strict schedules. Some thought of breastfeeding as primitive. Formula was touted as being equal to or superior to breast milk. Only recently, has the fact that "breast is best" been acknowledged. Other women were in the workforce. They may have felt that breastfeeding was not an option for them. They did not have the modern breast pump available to them. The medical community may not have encouraged breastfeeding at the time. It is not hard to imagine. After all, even with all the knowledge about the benefits of breastfeeding there are still many health professionals today that are uneducated and unsupportive of breastfeeding. With all the challenges in the way of breastfeeding, it is understandable why many women of yesterday did not choose to breastfeed.

Breastfeeding has come a long way but still many of the old thinking still carries on. Women are more educated on the subject; however, even with the many books and other information available, people are often most influenced by their immediate family and friends. Having the support of friends and family can boost the chances of having a successful breastfeeding experience. On the other hand, having to deal with criticism and misinformation from the people you are close to can sabotage a new mom trying to breastfeed.

There are many ways to deal with the negativity of others. One of the best things you can do is to try to understand why the person feels the way they do. Is it because they were taught differently about breastfeeding? Were they indoctrinated with the ideas that breastfeeding is primitive or inferior? Or is it that they feel breasts are a sexual object? Maybe they have never seen someone breastfeed and it makes them uncomfortable. This is the case with a lot of people. Once breastfeeding in public becomes more commonplace, perhaps, this will become less of a problem. Whatever the case, finding

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out the root of the person's issues with breastfeeding may help to resolve the tension.

Here are some things you can do to deal with criticism.

Be positive: It is hard for someone to argue with a happy, positive person. If you are excited and enthusiastic about breastfeeding it can be contagious

Try to educate them: Find information on the benefits of breastfeeding to mom and baby and share this with them. You don't have to "push this down their throat". Just be enthusiastic about your decision to breastfeed and share with them why you decided to.

Be sympathetic: A lot of times women are defensive because breastfeeding did not work out for them. If you sit and talk with any woman that really wanted to breastfeed, you can hear the sadness in her story. Try to be sympathetic and non-judgmental. Don't say things like "you could have or should

have". Share your experience, be positive, and let them know you care.

Try not to get angry: Breastfeeding conversations can get very heated. Getting angry with someone is not likely to change her feelings. It will just make you and her upset. If you don't feel like you can talk about breastfeeding with this person change the subject or avoid talking about it.

Use your doctor as your advocate: Sometimes the best thing you can do is tell someone that this is what your doctor recommends. What you think means very little to some people but a doctor's word carries weight.

Don't be sarcastic or insulting: Belittling someone is likely to make someone defensive. It is not a good approach to winning someone over. You may turn an opportunity to educate someone into a personal attack.

Stand your ground: Do not let someone else decide how you are going to parent. If they are uncomfortable then they will have to come to terms with it. You do not have to change the way you parent to suit someone else.

If nothing is working then you may just let the person know that you do not want to discuss the issue with them any more. Hopefully, it doesn't come to this.

Patty Hone is a wife and mommy to three kids. She is also co-owner of Justmommies.com. Justmommies is a community for mommies to make friends and find support. Please visit Justmommies at

Breastfeeding Your Child

By Angel Estrella

Breastfeeding refers to the process by which a mother feeds her infant with milk directly from her breasts. Assuming the mother does not have certain illnesses, breast milk is widely believed to be the most beneficial for feeding young infants. It is even said that breastfeeding can strengthen the bond between mother and child. Still, some mothers choose not to participate in breastfeeding their infants and opt for store bought formula instead.

There are a number of benefits, which result from breastfeeding for infants. Among them, immediate milk that does not have to be heated as it is already at body temperature. In addition, some experts believe that breastfeeding decreases the risk of certain ailments, while increasing the healthy development of teeth and gums.

Along with the infant, there are positive results that stem from breastfeeding for the mother. Among them, a nurturing feeling toward her infant, a quicker return to the mom's pre-birth weight and may help to prevent certain illnesses later on in life.

Often, the infant may refuse breastfeeding at first for a variety of reasons. Normally, these can be determined and corrected with proper instruction from a physician. These may be occurrences that go away by themselves or it may be an indication of an infant that has certain medical conditions that prevent them from feeding properly.

Mothers who have certain medical conditions or are taking certain medications should not participate in breastfeeding her infant. The reason is because either the illness or the medication itself may be transmitted to the infant during this time, which can be very harmful to him/her. For this reason, the mother must inform her doctor about any medications or ailments that she currently has prior to beginning to breastfeed her child.

Many new mothers do not realize it, but breastfeeding may cause soreness and even bruising. This is not unnatural, but can be a sign of improper positioning. These instances will usually clear themselves up, but should be checked by a physician just to be safe.

This article is to be used for informational purposes only. The information contained herein is not intended to be used in place of, or in conjunction with, professional medical advice or recommendations for or against breastfeeding. Before deciding to breastfeed their child, the new mother must consult a licensed medical doctor in order to determine the best course of action for his/her individual situation and the safe feeding of her child.

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