

# (M)Other Milk

My story – At The Well – July 2016

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Find out more about her work at: <https://goo.gl/45jOJj>*

I would say that my feeding story begins long before I was a mom, long before I even attempted to breastfeed my first born, a beautiful, healthy baby boy who was born at 36 weeks—catching us all by surprise.

My parents are divorced and both remarried, and had children during these second marriages, so I was old enough to remember both my mom and my step mom nursing their little babies. I remember my mom cooing at my baby brother while she would breastfeed him, and I remember hearing stories about how she used to feed my brother and how wonderful this experience was. These stories and memories generated a warm and fuzzy feeling within me.

So you can imagine my shock when I learned (fairly quickly) that breastfeeding was not all rainbows and unicorns. It was not a “plug and play” kind of thing – your newborn didn’t necessarily just latch on and milk didn’t just flow in abundance. I literally remember crying out in (toe curling) pain as my baby latched on in the middle of the night, nipples so sore that I would fear showering because the water coming down would make me recoil in pain. I remember my scrawny baby unable to thrive and put on any weight. Worst of all, I remember feeling that nobody had warned me about me any of this...!

Overwhelming feelings of inadequacy, incompetence and failure consumed me. I felt that I couldn’t do the most basic thing as a mother –feed my baby. These emotions left me feeling so very alone. How could I possibly be a good mother if I couldn’t even feed my baby?

After consulting lactation specialists, applying home remedies, and implementing pumping schedules, nipple guards, and fenugreek herbs to increase milk supply, I found that the most empowering resource available to me was the support of fellow mothers. Speaking to other moms who were going through similar difficulties gave me an enormous amount of strength and validation which enabled me to come to the most important understanding of motherhood—happy mothers make happy babies. The next day I realized that the toll breastfeeding was taking on me in my relationship with my newborn, and even my husband, was too great. I began formula the next day; not without guilt, but eventually I overcame it and today believe that for us, it was the best decision I could have made.

I have come to realize that the topic of feeding your baby is a huge, packed topic - one with ‘camps’ and agendas, social pressure and preconceived judgments. But as a friend of mine noted, this is a fluid topic (pun intended) in which there is no room for camps or agendas. Just as every birth is completely different and unique, so is every mother’s feeding story. There is no room for judgment – for right or wrong. A fed baby and a calm and empowered mother is what matters at the end of the day – however a mom chooses to get there.

Our greatest strength is in supporting each other and appreciating that there is an important choice here that belongs to each mother, and her alone. Feeding your baby is about you as a woman making your own decision, taking control over your body and embracing your newfound motherhood. This choice is to be respected, whatever it may be. Full stop.

I created (M)Other Milk to capture these feeding stories and compile them into a book that will be a source for support, strength and community. There is nothing more powerful than reading a story that resonates with you; it creates an intense bond with a fellow mother who you may have never met, but with whom you suddenly feel so close and heard. This is my story and I would love to collect fellow mother’s stories, so I can compile this beautiful book and together we can support moms all over, forever.

