

Breastfeeding matters



***What I wish I'd known
Breastfeeding after loss
Our tongue tie experience***

La Leche League GB
mother-to-mother support for breastfeeding

Sep/Oct 2016 #215

La Leche League GB

For breastfeeding support from pregnancy through to weaning call our

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0845 120 2918

Websites
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to find your local LLL contact
or submit a Help Form

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breastfeeding information

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Breastfeeding Matters is YOUR magazine, we always need your letters and stories. Photos need to be clear and good quality—please send high resolution digital photos to the Editors at editor@laleche.org.uk

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National Helpline 0845 120 2918



Photo courtesy of
Helen Lloyd
LLL Bath

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Editor's letter

What is LLL about?

If you're reading this, you are probably already a member of LLL, and you may well have a local group where you can go to meetings. But it's always worth stopping to ask, especially in an anniversary year like this (LLLGB's 45th and LLL's 60th!), what LLL stands for and what it does.

I can't possibly answer this succinctly in one page, but I would urge you to keep reading the magazine, keep coming to meetings, keep joining in with us on social media. You can see the massive range of ways that mother to mother support happens, and learn more and more about how LLL philosophy weaves its way into so many aspects of mothering. It's a learning journey for all of us, and I still can't get too much of it.

We've got, as usual, an article for you this issue that is explicitly about aspects of LLL's philosophy, but you can see so many other sides to it in the other stories too. We hear about a baby's intense need to be with his mother; about the effects of difficult birth; about satisfying a baby's needs by mothering through breastfeeding. We can also see stories of older babies' continuing need to nurse, and of support from others around a mother. Every breastfeeding journey is unique, but those of us who have experienced the joy (as well as the challenges!) of feeding our babies at the breast, of seeing them grow on our milk and rely on us so utterly – we have something so important in common. And LLL has always given us a space to share these joys and common experiences as well as complaining about the hard bits and celebrating our differences.

It's a time of change for the magazine: it's just too hard for me to make the time to do it while giving my boys as much of me as they need. So this is my last issue as Editor, and I must end by thanking Emma for her work on the "mother to mother" feature each issue, Benaifer for her graphic design, Ginny for acting as a consultant and keeping us in check, and dear Justine, my precious co-editor, who will be moving on too and I'm sure will miss it just as much. And of course, thank you to all of you who have contributed during my three years as Editor: I have felt truly privileged to be able to read and then share your stories. Please do keep on sending things in to us!

Helen

Helen Lloyd is a Leader in Bath and is mum to Isaac (5) and Aneurin (2).

Co-Editor Justine Fieth is a Leader in Cambridge and is mum to Josh (12) and Kezia (8).

Join us to chat on Facebook at www.facebook.com/breastfeedinglllgb

In the early years the baby has an intense need to be with his mother which is as basic as his need for food.

(One of the ten LLL philosophy statements)



Photo courtesy of Kimberley Berry

What I wish I'd known

Kimberley Berry

Kimberley is loving breastfeeding, but had some hiccups on the way, so here she shares what she wishes she had known when she started out.

The picture you can see here shows me nursing my little boy in a local wood, filled with bluebells. At this stage he was only eight weeks old and it was a pivotal point in our breastfeeding journey as it signifies a time that breastfeeding had become a beautiful and special part of our daily routine. Prior to this I found it a laborious, painful, lonely, exhausting and frustrating feat.

When I fell pregnant, I always knew I wanted to breastfeed. It seemed a natural choice for me and I thought it would be an extension to my beautiful hypno-birth labour, all natural, free from fear, just as my body was purpose built for. My partner was hugely supportive and very pro-breastfeeding so I was over the moon when my little one latched on effortlessly when he was first born.

I felt sad and disappointed that something I thought should be so natural and easy had made me feel so rotten.

It felt like he and I had been feeding this way for years and I was raring to go and reap all the breastfeeding benefits that I had been told of. Unfortunately, I wasn't aware of a few pitfalls along the way. And sadly I think it's these pitfalls that put many women off attempting to breastfeed or persevering through the exhaustion, tears and bleeding nipples to get to the other side. So here are a couple of things I wish someone had told me:

I wish someone had told me the warning signs of mastitis. Day two of nursing and suddenly my right breast was engorged and on fire. I also had a horrid temperature and felt exhausted (not just new mama exhausted). At this stage I started to feel very sorry for myself and a bit resentful that my little bundle of joy needed to feed off this enormous and painful breast. So I stopped feeding on the right side, thinking that a break from the sudden constant use would make it feel better. BIG MISTAKE: it got worse and worse until my partner mentioned it to the health visitor who immediately gave me antibiotics and told me to swirl my breasts around in warm water (which really does help by the way).

Until this point, I had never even heard of mastitis so had no idea about what to look out for. I'd dutifully attended the breastfeeding classes prior to giving birth and they never

even mentioned it. I felt sad and disappointed that something I thought should be so natural and easy had made me feel so rotten and worst of all I'd started to associate feeding my little man with pain rather than the special bonding experience I so desperately desired.

With my partner's support, I persevered through and the mastitis cleared up. Within a few days I felt immensely better and was so happy to be back on track.

A couple of weeks later when I felt back in the swing of things my little one started having really strange poos – stranger than usual. As I'm sure many people can relate to, it's normal to be obsessed with the colour, frequency and consistency of your newborn's nappy when you are first time parents. My partner and I often laugh at the poo related things we were googling at 3am!

Suddenly, my little boy's poo became green and stringy and at the same time my nipples were becoming increasingly sore, cracked and bleeding. And just like that I was dreading each feed, associating it again with pain and discomfort and wondering if switching to formula was easier for me; perhaps I just wasn't destined to be a natural breastfeeder. This thought made me feel so sad and disappointed in myself.

My partner sensed my disappointment and recommended we went to our local breastfeeding clinic for some advice. I cannot fault the health visitors at our local clinic: they were supportive, friendly and knowledgeable. They were keen for me to demonstrate how my baby latched on and which positions I was finding most comfortable for nursing.

It turns out that the simple explanation for the green, stringy poos and painful nipples was simply that we'd stopped being so careful with our latch. Maybe I was naive but I had no idea how important it was to ensure a really good latch each and every time because this way the baby is sure to get a really satisfying feed. I wished I had known that!

These little breastfeeding challenges were so simple and so common but at the time seemed like the most horrendous thing that could happen (I blame the sleep deprivation!). I am so incredibly happy that I didn't give up during those first eight weeks;

believe me, there were many tears and many times I'd fought with myself not to! Breastfeeding has become a natural, enjoyable and convenient part of our day.

My boy is now 20 weeks old and I treasure the contented little noises he makes when nursing and the way he gets milk drunk. In fact, I'm beginning to dread starting him on solids so he's not just breastfeeding any longer – and I never thought I'd say that!

Editor's note: You can get our leaflet Positioning and Attachment from the LLLGB shop, or through the Kindle store.



La Leche League GB
mother-to-mother support for breastfeeding

How To GET HELP

www.laleche.org.uk is the quickest way to access the most up to date breastfeeding support. Read the many leaflets and articles available on a wide range of topics, or fill in a Helpform for one to one email support. Quickly find your local group to access the range of support available in your area.

0845 120 2918 is the number to call to speak with a La Leche League Leader.

LLLGB because Breastfeeding Matters is our page on Facebook full of links and articles as well as the support of Leaders and other mothers.

Twitter@LLLGB is the way to keep up with all that LLLGB is doing right now.

LLLGB is proud to announce and welcome our newest Leaders

Bess Purser Donald—LLL Derbyshire

Hannah Croft—LLL Kent

Morna Goldie—LLL Kinross

Tessa Clark—LLL Chilterns



Breastfeeding after loss

**Hillary Taylor-McCaffery
LLL Farnham**

Hillary suffered the heartbreak of the loss of her first child, a son. When her daughter was born, they built up a breastfeeding relationship that helped with growth and healing.

7 April 2013, is the day I gave birth to my first child, a boy. Dark-haired, with elfin features and his Dad's long legs, he was beautiful but he was lifeless; he would never take a breath. Two days previously his heart had stopped at 35 weeks and my dreams of a natural birth, of hearing my baby's voice, of holding him to my breast, were snuffed out.

In the weeks before this I had been taught to hand-express and store colostrum. I was given little vials to store any "liquid gold", as the midwife called it, to give to my baby when he was born. I tried and tried to produce milk. Hours spent massaging and kneading my breasts were fruitless and I resigned myself to the fact that my milk would come when it was needed – when my son first latched on.

At the hospital, after washing and dressing my son, after taking pictures of his beautiful face, after signing papers and consenting to an autopsy, I asked what would happen to my milk. I had heard there were pills you could take to dry everything up before it came in, but the consultant said they would cause more problems than necessary.

*We left the hospital carrying a
heavy weight although our arms
were empty.*

*Sometimes I felt like my breasts
were making up for lost time.*

I stayed with my son for several hours. When night fell we kissed his cold cheeks, tucked him into his cot, spoke our last words to him, and left the hospital carrying a heavy weight although our arms were empty.

Three days later my milk came in. I stood over the sink in the mornings and watched it drip down the drain, along with my dreams of being a breastfeeding mother.

11 June 2015, is the day I gave birth to my second child, a girl. Her birth was fairly traumatic and immediately after she was born she was taken away to be resuscitated. However, within minutes we heard her cry and she was brought to me and put onto my chest. I took off my shirt and unwrapped her blanket, pressing her skin to my bare chest. I then gently guided her to my breast where she immediately latched on and looked at me with her dark, beady eyes. Thus began my journey of breastfeeding.

My breasts produced much more milk than was necessary; sometimes I felt like they were making up for lost time. My baby fussed at the breast, spluttering on the stream of milk that would often overpower her and even spray her in the face! I would soak through breast pads in mere hours. My daughter was gassy and often frustrated, but she was happy and she was growing.

I was often reminded of the blessing of being able to breastfeed, whether it was during long, sleepless nights, or during car journeys. When she needed to have her nails cut for the first time, my husband accidentally nicked her skin; her heart-breaking cries were soon softened by a swiftly-bared breast. The instant comfort provided by my milk not only benefited my sweet daughter, but it also gave me confidence as a mother.

My daughter is now one and still nurses frequently, furiously signing “milk” with both hands whenever I pick her up from nursery. Our breastfeeding journey has been one of hope and healing. I was unable to save my first baby, nor was I able to share with him my milk, but I have managed to nourish my daughter for an entire year with something that took no effort to produce. I have created a bond through nursing that has softened the pain of my previous loss.

I will be forever grateful for the support of La Leche League Farnham; without them I would have surely faltered along the way. A small but supportive group of women has empowered me to find confidence in my body again and to find strength through breastfeeding when some days I could do only that.

*Our breastfeeding journey
has been one of hope and
healing.*

Our tongue tie experience

Louisa Geddes

Louisa shares her experiences of the early days of feeding a baby with a tongue tie, and describes what helped her to understand what was going on.

My six week old son is about to have an appointment for his tongue tie. The doctor finally confirmed it today after it was missed by two midwives, but I pushed the point that the paediatrician at birth said he had a 'slight' tongue tie. That referral was lost, and I had to follow it up. He has gained weight well which is another reason why it seems to have been hard to get a referral, even though it can still cause problems with feeding.

This is what I noticed with feeding:

Slipping off the latch and a loose latch at the breast and bottle; milk coming out of the sides of his mouth when feeding; fussing and crying at the breast; coming off and on the breast and being irritable; sometimes no sensation of relief for my breasts after a feed almost as if he hasn't fed properly; a 'clicking' sensation during a feed as if his tongue is silently slipping; very sore and cracked nipples at first; and a difficult feeding relationship.

My daughter had similar issues and never had a confirmed tongue tie or lip tie but I suspect she has both, as feeding seemed hard work with her too, though I still fed her until she was two years old.

I would suggest asking clearly that they check for a tongue tie as soon as you notice issues, and pushing for a referral even if you are told the tie

appears mild, since this can still affect feeding. It's not whether it is 'mild' that matters but about how your baby can use his tongue. My son has gained weight, as I said, and so did my other children, but I still believe tongue tie should be looked into. It does affect feeding to the point where I gave him some formula to cope with the difficulties (not recommended and can cause other problems with breastfeeding but a choice I made for my sanity).

Communicate early and often with La Leche League Leaders and other infant feeding specialists experienced in tongue tie and request a referral if you or anyone else suspects it. I do wonder how many mothers give up breastfeeding because of tongue tie being missed.

I am still breastfeeding and although I'm nervous about the procedure, I'm looking forward to experiencing breastfeeding without a tie. My friend Emma Lou has been an amazing support and her LLL friends supported me through Messenger when I was so sore; Emma regularly mentioned tongue tie and told me her experiences with her son and tongue tie which pushed me to get a referral.

Editors's note: For more information about tongue tie and breastfeeding, visit www.laleche.org.uk/tongue-tie

Where is the most memorable place you have breastfed?

**Jodie Warrington
LLL Clapham**



Mothers from LLL Clapham shared their memorable moments as part of their #celebratebreastfeeding week meeting.

Sitting on the curb watching the Olympic torch pass by in Brixton!
Izzy

At sunny, peaceful Stonehenge quietly reflecting on all the women who would've breastfed there before me.
Jodie

On the hill below Greenwich Observatory – memorable for me as it's the only photo of me breastfeeding, and it was SUCH a big deal for me to go on an all day outing to Greenwich with my parents who were visiting. I was terrified about how I was going to manage to feed my baby all day long out of the house!
Helen

I was in France and there was a strike so I had to wait for an hour and a half for the train. I needed to feed my baby. I had a breastfeeding apron and breastfed him. People looking seemed very impressed. Everything went smoothly and now I can feed him anywhere.
Nathalie

Walking down Tooting High Street after getting my nails done. It was a very big achievement as my son stayed latched on the whole way. I was discreet and didn't ruin my nails!
Sophia



Photo courtesy of Sophia

Rochester Cathedral as our NCT friend's twins were baptised by their grandpa who was the Deacon.

Nicola

Getting off a ferry and on to a steam train, in the rain!

Evie

In my local children's centre, as it was the first time she latched on with no pain after seven days of trying.

Zara

At the top of the Shard! Lola had been fine on the lower levels but became very fussy once we reached the top floor. I found a corner, settled down and fed while enjoying the view!

Stephanie

At the 2012 London Paralympics. T was three months old and I fed very discreetly in the sling. Whilst watching the news that night daddy commented how discreet I was as we flashed up on screen!

Charlotte



At lunchtime on the terrace of Coq d'Argent in the City where I met a work colleague who was also on maternity leave. The staff were amazing and we never felt self-conscious. We had an amazing lunch and the babies did too – especially as we were both doing baby led weaning and the chef provided wonderful food without added salt. Highly recommend!

Charlotte

Where haven't I breastfed would be a better question! Most recently pre-schooler on the London Eye with a great view.

Christine

I breastfed on the London Eye today too!

Ellen



Reflections

Nancy Cattini
LLL Oxfordshire

Do you remember the womb?

(written September 2013)

Do you remember the womb, little one? Do you remember the womb?
How dark and cosy and safe in there, as you slowly ran out of room.

Do you remember the womb, little one? Do you remember the womb?
How bright and scary the world must have seemed, when you were ripped from your cocoon.

Do you remember the womb, little one? Do you remember the womb?
You need constant cuddles and milk to feel safe, as if you came to the world too soon.

It's not quite time to wean yet

(written October 2015, when my son found comfort from the breast again when he hadn't fed at night for some time)

You wake in the night, screaming uncontrollably,
shouting for what you want, but unsure yourself what that is,
your two year old brain, for now, incapable of reason.

Comfort and admonishment fall on deaf ears.
you step it up a gear, kicking and thrashing about.

I stroke your hair to soothe you, but you're in such a state you don't notice.
I am at a loss.

Then something changes.

You clamber into my arms and curl up, like you're a newborn again.

I rock and cradle you in my arms, like I did the day you were born,
and every day since.

I stroke your hair again.

Your sobs slow to gasping, shuddering breaths, then subside.

As you snuggle against me you seek the comfort and familiarity of the breast,
like you did countless times in the night when you were smaller, and
until recently,

but not so much now.
When did this change?
It's not quite time to wean yet.
As you suck I feel you relax.
Finally, satisfied and spent, you sleep.

An end

(written May 2016)

I can't remember the last time we nursed,
Quietly, unobtrusively the days have become weeks,
The last feed unremarkable, like any other,
Neither of us aware it would be our last.
Three long years of feeding, and your needing this so intensely,
Sometimes me wishing this time would last forever,
Other times wondering if it would ever stop.
In the end it slipped out of the door silently, unnoticed,
Never to return.



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- ♦ prepare new Leaders
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Breastfeeding Matters

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or ask your local LLL Leader for a membership form

If I knew then what I know now

Kerry Panagiotopoulos
LLL Kent

Kerry reflects on lessons learned in her and her son's nursing journey so far.

My little pre-schooler son is fast asleep as I sit here and reminisce about our ongoing breastfeeding journey. I can't recall a particular moment which made me decide I wanted to breastfeed. My rationale just seemed to be, "that's why I have them, so that's what I'll use them for" (that simple, hey?). Reflecting on it, his arrival was traumatic, partly, much to my regret, due to my lack of education on birth and breastfeeding. Boy, if I knew then what I know now. There would have been a lot more smiles and a lot less crying – from both of us.

I was frightened when Theo was first born. All of these strange words felt like they were being thrown at me, 'Jaundice', 'low sodium', 'supplements', while all I kept thinking was "I've not made him properly, I've let us down". My nipples very quickly became cracked and bleeding. I attended a lactation consultant's breastfeeding talk on the ward, and sobbed about my worries. She gave me a few positioning steps to try and off I went. Before long, she tapped on

my curtain and asked to look into Theo's mouth. She quickly remarked that he had a tongue tie and the words stuck into my head like glue and my heart had sunk a little further. I desperately wanted to breastfeed, to the point of stubbornness: I didn't know much about breastfeeding at that point, but my instincts and urge to continue felt enough.

The next scary word was 'reflux'. Poor Theo could never keep a sleepsuit clean for an hour. Milk, milk, milk everywhere. In hindsight, I had an overactive letdown or an oversupply issue – yet there I was with Gaviscon at every feed.

*...despite Theo's poor latch,
the sheer amount of milk I
was making helped sustain his
growth.*

But I think in a way it helped because despite Theo's poor latch, the sheer amount of milk I was making helped sustain his growth. I'm in no way suggesting an oversupply compensates for a tongue tie, but I think it may have kept our unique circumstance out of dangerous waters.

I finally got the courage to get Theo's tongue tie snipped at five months! I was so sad about my birth experience that I really didn't want anyone touching him again. I thought to myself, "I can cope with the pain." Looking back, I'm not sure if it made any real difference. Our latch is still poor and uncomfortable. There was no 'magic fix'. Perhaps things have just got easier over time from Theo's developing mouth rather than the tongue division. I guess my journey illustrates that, looking back, with no support through those crucial months, so many things were poorly managed and unrecognised. But with patience and sheer determination (and luck, I could say), we still managed to keep going. Breastfeeding is a skill – an art! As mothers, we are continuously learning along with our babies.

I was a very isolated mother. With all my in-laws in Greece, no friends or family around me, and a husband working long hours I was lonely. When Theo was roughly eight months I felt like the only mother still breastfeeding her baby, and I reached out for some support. I became a Breastfeeding Peer supporter for the

...how relieved I felt to find a book on mothering that felt like it was written for me but by women I wanted to be friends with...

Children's Centre and at one session, an LLL breastfeeding counsellor and a peer supporter were talking about LLL and I had no idea what they were talking about. After little convincing, I attended a meeting in Faversham, and it just felt like a home from home.

I remember sitting in my car afterwards, literally welling up with joy from being in an environment where I felt so much acceptance and trust and finally having some company. I purchased *The Womanly Art of Breastfeeding* and sobbed chapter after chapter about how much I wished I had read it eight months ago, and how relieved I felt to find a book on mothering that felt like it was written for me but by women I wanted to be friends with and surround myself with forevermore.

LLL will have a place in my heart for the rest of my life. It helps me feel like the mother I want to be, despite my struggles, it keeps me focused, and on my path of happiness. I'd like to think Theo would thank LLL too, because I think he's very happy about the mother I have become.

Mothering through breastfeeding is the most natural and effective way of understanding and satisfying the needs of the baby.

(One of the ten LLL philosophy statements)

Looking back over the years

**Eva Bay Greenslade
LLL West Sussex**

Eva has breastfed four children now, and tells us how her experiences changed over that time.

I have breastfed in total for seven years and counting, now that's one fifth of my life. I have had four children and am still feeding my youngest who is well into his second year.

My childbearing began when I was 16 years old. I had my beautiful daughter who is now 19. I found breastfeeding really hard in the beginning. I knew it was best, though, so I persevered. Her delivery was in hospital and we had no issues although no single person or book could prepare me for the intensity of labour apart from advice from a friend who said to trust my body as it was made for labour.

Breastfeeding in hospital wasn't great, and not one midwife came to help me which was particularly disappointing considering my age. I felt quite alone but I tried, and even had her sleeping with me which was a big no in hospital but because no one came to check they didn't know.

Once we were home things seemed fine, but then after five days blisters and cracks appeared on my nipples and the pain was excruciating.

I remember my mum going out to find formula but because it was a Sunday evening in the 90's and all the shops were closed including even the petrol station. She rang round friends and

fortunately by the time she located some formula my daughter was latched on and we had fallen asleep comfortably feeding...and we fed for a year.

My second, third and fourth babies were easy after that and I've fed longer with each into their second year and longer. My current experience with my fourth has been slightly harder because I have had to work full-time but we fed every evening and during the night until she was 18 months and now we just feed during the day.

Breastfeeding is truly amazing. There are times my children have been ill and I wonder how we'd have got by without it as the breast was all they could take and all they would want. I've stopped twice with my current daughter due to extreme tiredness from working full-time and being awake at night, but then returned to it as both times within three weeks she developed diarrhoea and vomiting which could have hospitalized her. But with beginning baby led breastfeeding again she's recovered and been fine.

I'm lying feeding my sleepy daughter as I write this. A book I have calls breastfeeding the food of love and I think that explains it perfectly.

The difference support can make

**Emma Bollands
LLL Tyne & Wear**

Emma warmed to the idea of breastfeeding during her pregnancy, but found things tough going at first. When she came across the help and support she needed, it made all the difference.

Photos courtesy of Emma Bollands

I remember when I was pregnant with Jack. It was a tense first three months as we had lost a child just before my first 12 week scan, so it wasn't until I saw Jack shadow boxing away on the ultrasound that I really let myself believe he was real. All at once I had thoughts about the kind of mother I wanted to be but one that I never gave much thought to was whether I would be a breastfeeding mother.

The first time I thought about it, it seemed so alien to me. I thought I'd prefer to formula feed. I was formula fed and I'm ok, right? My brother was formula fed too – I still remember the Milton fluid in the brown plastic steriliser full of his bottles on our kitchen bench back in 1981.

I had never even seen someone breastfeed before. Anyway, boobs are for making you look nice, aren't they? As the months passed, though, and my bump grew, the thought of nursing my baby started to appeal to me. I went shopping

with my own mother and along with the muslins (what are they for??) and the tiny clothes were three bottles. I unpacked them when I got home and thought to myself "I'll give breastfeeding a try, and if I don't like it I'll switch to bottles".

By the time I got to seven or eight months pregnant I knew I wanted to breastfeed. I thought if I could make it to three months that would be great. My husband and I went along to the breastfeeding antenatal class. He was the only man there, poor thing! It was in that antenatal class, devoted to the importance of breastfeeding, as we passed around the knitted boob and heard phrases such as "tummy to mummy" that we experienced the first massive hurdle to nursing. My husband asked a very reasonable question: "If Emma is feeding the baby herself, what can I do to help?" The response will go with me to my grave "You can run the Hoover over". Okay. Not what we were going for, and certainly not something to help his bond with our



child. So we didn't ask any more questions. How was that a hurdle? Well I firmly believe that successful breastfeeding relies on an army of support.

Despite my pre-eclampsia, meaning that Jack had to be forced into the world a couple of weeks early, and an incredibly long labour with many interventions (induction/injected pain relief/an epidural/14 hours of expanding/two hours of pushing and finally an episiotomy and forceps) we were lucky that Jack latched onto my breast from the get go. Less than 24 hours later we were home, I was feeding and it hurt. It really, really hurt! I was blessed though. At my first midwife visit I mentioned that I had pain when feeding Jack and that same afternoon was visited, at home, by Amanda.

Within ten minutes she had helped me to fix my latch (aided with propping my boob with a muslin – there's one use!) and even showed me how to feed lying down. It was amazing. Although I'd never felt passionately about wanting to feed Jack myself I remember the elation when I first saw white milk in the corner of his mouth, "Look! Real milk!". And so it began. When Amanda visited she mentioned a breastfeeding support group called Bosom Buddies at a place I'd previously never knew existed called the Rainbow Centre. I thought I might pop down, just to see what happened.

I remember the first meeting. I got there early. Soon I was joined by two wonderful ladies called Claire and Sarah, both of whom had their little ones in tow. I recall being mildly shocked at the ease they showed when breastfeeding. I was still in the clunky, 'I hope no one sees my boobs' stage then. These ladies made it look easy. Over the weeks I met new ladies and new babies. Every one of these ladies had their own stories and questions and I started to learn things really quickly.

I did have some big doubts, though. My baby didn't sleep well. I was up through the night a lot, for months... it started to get me down. One morning, after a particularly bad night, I remember walking to the Rainbow Centre and feeling like I was in a dream. All the colour seemed faded. I felt detached from my life. As I got to Bosom Buddies Jack started crying inconsolably. I couldn't help it, my tears started too. I felt like such a

I couldn't remember the last time I had a full cup of tea.

failure... why won't my baby sleep? What am I doing wrong? Do I not deserve to be a mother? Sarah stepped forward, she put her arm around me, told me I was ok and took Jack from me. She rocked him in her arms as he started to settle. Claire passed me a cup of tea and I drank the entire cup full. I couldn't remember the last time I had a full cup of tea. I cried for ages. The ladies all started to tell me about when they had felt the same way, how old their children were when they, finally, started to sleep through. They really helped me to see I wasn't alone.

At my next health visitor appointment, I was honest: "No, I'm not alright. I don't think I can do this properly". My health visitor was so kind. She scored me as on the boundary for post-natal depression. I felt awful about it. Did that mean I was a crazy woman who didn't love her baby? She reassured me that lots of mothers felt like I did and that she wanted to book some extra visits to make sure I was ok. She was amazing.

Throughout all of this I kept going to Bosom Buddies. I learned about "one up one down" when feeding in public and mastered it. Over the weeks and months my confidence grew with my experience and the shared experiences of others. I found that I was no longer the new girl and I could now be the one who shushed a baby while the new mother had a good cry and a hot cup of sweet tea. I had found my army.

After I moved on from nursing Jack I decided I wanted to train as a peer supporter myself so I could offer support to mothers who wanted it. I learned so much from the honesty of these women.

In April 2014 our second son appeared (more pre-eclampsia and more inductions but this time only gas and air!). I let him move himself across my chest and find my nipple for himself. He latched on superbly. That was probably the last time he did. He had a terrible latch! I spent every feed with two fingers pushing more boob into his mouth, but we did it. Again, he was a terrible sleeper (and still is!) and I found myself desperate. I remember vividly turning to my husband and begging him to go out and buy formula and bottles. He asked me one question that changed everything "Why do you want to stop breastfeeding?". I didn't. In that single question he calmed me and made me realise how much I still wanted this, despite the sleep deprivation and the poor latch.

I initially set out to breastfeed one baby for three months. I fed Jack for just over eight months and Michael for about ten. There is no doubt in my mind that I would never have succeeded without the support I got from my husband and from my army – the Bosom Buddies.

Our family is complete now so I will never again know the joy of sitting in silence in my baby's room, staring at aeroplanes passing through the clouds as my son feeds himself to a calm sleep. But I will always remember it and I'm so glad I had the support around me to make it happen.

He asked me one question that changed everything "Why do you want to stop breastfeeding?"

Have you heard of LLL?

My first meeting

Tessa Clark
LLL Oxfordshire

It was Wednesday. I needed help, I was running out of places to turn and stamina to keep breastfeeding. I was searching for the answers that fitted me and my baby. A lady I met said with concern in her voice, have you heard of LLL?

I avidly looked it up. My next local meeting would be two days away, in a private house, 45 minutes away from home. Maybe not, I thought.

Now it's Thursday. Things are bad. I drive the three hour round trip to the lactation consultant's free clinic and still don't feel satisfied with the answers I'm hearing. Ok, I think, I'll give this LLL place a try.

It's the day of the meeting, and nothing seems to be going to plan. I feel drunk on tiredness and I don't want leave the house. Desperation drove me out the house and off to the meeting. If nothing else, the drive would clear my head.

Now we are in the car, we made it here about 10 minutes early and I can't work out which house I need to go in. I walk up and down the road. Panic! Baby might die in the car if I'm not there! Back in the car and I sit watching every woman like a hawk. Do I think she just had a baby? Does she know where this meeting is?

When it was time to leave, I felt jubilant and drained.

The negative thoughts start to creep in, I start to think I'm a useless mother. I even go as far as putting in the directions on the satnav to go home and I cry a bit whilst feeding now screaming baby.

Cry a bit more and re-read the online information: I was looking for the wrong house. Magically, and maddeningly, I am parked right outside the right one, and there is a sign. I grab our bag and make a run for the house as we are now 25 minutes late!

I am offered a cup of tea as soon as I've confirmed I'm in the right place. There's a table filled with food, every chair has a mum and a baby nearby and magically there is the lady who recommended the meeting to me.

I listen avidly as the meeting starts, in awe as the mothers take turns to talk about the amazingness of breastfeeding as a mothering tool, and it's all too much, and I cry some more.

The lady opposite me is subjected to my questions as I wait to talk to the lone Leader inundated with new mums in tears. My helper reverently holds in front of her, the LLL manual, *The Womanly Art of Breastfeeding*. I reflect that I already have a copy!

I remember my stepmother's consternation when I heralded it as the solution to my problems a few

weeks earlier. I report that I found it hard to get on with the index as it never sent me to information I wanted to read and it all seemed a bit permissive for my liking. My helper stumbles over her words, taken aback by my backhanded insult. She recovers and opts to read me out a section she thinks sums up the place she felt I was at.

I did get to speak to a Leader after the meeting. I quizzed her about tongue ties, block feeding and mastitis. I was given lots of time to talk. I felt listened to but I didn't get many answers, as I had come to expect from other breastfeeding clinics, but oddly this was ok. When it was time to leave, I felt jubilant and drained. I had a burning need to make sense of this wacky, but wonderful experience I had just had.

I called in unannounced at a friend's house on the way home and bored her for a few hours about everything I'd heard, and she vowed to come to the next meeting and help me suss it out.

That night my husband asked how we were today. I hastened to tell him that I thought I'd found something special. It might, just might change our luck. I talked of these strong amazing women I met, breastfeeding their walking, talking children. I joked about it being obviously weird but also interesting. Maybe they will convert me to their strange ways, I said. My husband informed me that if I'm still breastfeeding at six months, let alone a year, it means divorce for us. I laughed and shrank a little inside. Don't worry I said, weaning happens at six months and I'll be back at work by nine months, with my boobs safely packed away again.

LLL has given me so much more than help to breastfeed.

I went back again and again. I found it addictive, inspiring and I truly counted the days down until the next meeting. A lot of things have changed since that first meeting.

Writing this, I am nursing my toddler sized breastfeeding enthusiast, and I realise LLL has given me so much more than help to breastfeed. I now am proud to trust my own judgement. I have confidence to trust my baby's own timetable for separation, feeds, introduction of solids and weaning. The other often less talked about benefit, is cake (and lots of it!).

As time has gone on and as I've become more involved with the running of my local group, I can truly see the value in membership. I always used to cringe when it's mentioned in a meeting but I now happily find the money to support LLL. It helps to know it ensures the support I needed so badly before, is there for the next mum and the one after that too.

Through *Breastfeeding Matters*, I have learned that I enjoy writing about my experiences and sharing them with others. It's such rewarding experience and I encourage everyone to write about their journey. You never know who your words might touch. I wanted to reach out to the people I meet who have never attended a meeting, to say this is what it was like for me, and this is why it's worth the effort.

I am still married, still not back at work, and aiming for natural weaning with the expanding support of my husband. As he summarised for me, when I read him this piece, you took a chance going to that first meeting and it paid off good and proper. I certainly am grateful every day that I followed that lady who dared to say, have you heard of LLL?



Second time

Holly Newton, LLL Bath

Holly honestly shares her different experiences with her daughter and her son, one breastfed and one bottle fed.

My first experience of breastfeeding was not a positive one. My daughter, Anna, was born at 5lb 13ozs after a difficult pregnancy and birth and could not latch on. We tried lots of skin to skin, nipple shields, had a tongue tie cut and saw various breastfeeding counsellors who couldn't work out why she couldn't do it, other than guessing it was because she was small. For eight weeks I expressed milk and tried desperately to get her to latch and it was incredibly stressful. She hated being put down while I expressed, screaming through each session, and I lost so much sleep to pumping and sterilising. In the end I decided to move to formula feeding. It was a very difficult decision and I felt guilty and sad, but it was the right decision for us at that point.

When I became pregnant for the second time I was very anxious that it would all go wrong again. I heard about LLL at my hypnobirthing course and went along to a meeting shortly before my due date to try and get some support in place. They were so friendly and welcoming and I felt good knowing I had people to call on if I needed to. When my son was born I got him to my breast as soon as I could, but initially he couldn't latch. He had been born by forceps and he was rather dazed and very sleepy. During the first night in hospital I had to hand express and feed with a syringe and I had a feeling of dread thinking 'here we go again'. The next day I transferred to a birth centre and I received fantastic support whilst I was there and that evening he latched on and fed!

To start with latching was tricky and we both had to get the hang of it, but after a while it became second nature. For several months I really struggled with lots of pain whilst feeding and as he was a very hungry baby it was really hard. I went back to an LLL meeting and got more lovely support and suggestions. It wasn't an easy time and on several occasions I nearly gave up, but eventually all the pain stopped and since then breastfeeding has been wonderfully easy, convenient and enjoyable. My son is now eight months old and we are going strong with no intention of stopping any time soon!

I was surprised how much pressure I faced when I struggled feeding Anna and how much disapproval I experienced over choices I made at that point. Equally I have been surprised how many people assume you will stop breastfeeding once your baby is six months old! But I have also found that if you know where to look there is an awful lot of support available.

Before having children I really didn't realise how hard breastfeeding can be and I now feel a huge amount of empathy with women who struggle. I certainly won't be

judging anyone's choices on feeding their baby! I hope I'm now able to pass on my little bit of knowledge to friends who ask for support.

There are definitely pros and cons to both breastfeeding and bottle feeding and, although I feel sad that I missed out on the experience with my daughter and very grateful to have been able to have it with my son, I certainly don't feel it affected my bonding with my daughter and I really enjoyed cuddles whilst bottle feeding her as well.

I'm really thankful for the support I have received and continue to receive from the Bath LLL group and I'm looking forward to enjoying the rest of my breastfeeding journey with my son.

Human milk is the natural food for babies, uniquely meeting their changing needs.

(One of the ten LLL philosophy statements)



Human milk is the natural food for babies, uniquely meeting their changing needs

A series discussing the LLL philosophy concepts.

Benaifer Bhandari

*This article is part of a series discussing the LLL philosophy concepts. You may be aware that there are ten concepts underlying what LLL does. As Leaders, we sign up to these, and they help to shape our responses, the way we run meetings, and the type of information that we provide. This issue, we look more closely at “**Human milk is the natural food for babies, uniquely meeting their changing needs.**”*

Isn't this obvious?

Many mothers who discuss the qualities of human milk speak of how much better human milk is for human babies, than the milk of any other animal. This concept is not saying that at all! It isn't saying it is best, or even better than other milks.

Why not say it's the best ... it is, isn't it?

We stay away from rating human milk in this way because in LLL we believe human milk for human babies cannot be rated – it stands alone because it is the only natural food made for human babies. It has qualities which are so unique, we cannot compare human milk to other milks.

What are the outstanding qualities?

There are so many! For each mother, different qualities will be outstanding. For example, the mother of a premature baby may be in awe of the special milk her body is producing especially for her early baby, tailored exactly to meet that body's need to keep growing outside the womb. For another mother it may be the reassurance that on a hot day her body is producing a milk which will be perfectly thirst-quenching for her baby. Or perhaps it may be the reassurance of knowing that the hormonal make-up of mothers' milk changes according to the time of day so aiding the baby to awaken in the morning or relax and sleep at night – that really is outstanding!

I fed my first child formula. When I hear phrases like this concept, it makes me really uncomfortable.

No mother should be made to feel uncomfortable. We understand every woman makes her own choices, based on many factors we are not privy to. Another advantage of the phrase “Human milk is the natural food for babies” is that it really does not compare different milks and hopefully does not isolate parents who have made different choices with earlier babies.

OK, so tell me more about these outstanding qualities.

How about the fact that the quality of breastmilk plus the quantity, are not usually affected by malnutrition in the mother?

Isn't this an amazing fact which can do so much to alleviate suffering in countries where a mother may really struggle to take in optimum calories?

Another amazing fact is that even at the age of two, as the immune system starts to complete itself, breastmilk continues to reinforce that healthy immune system for as long as feeding continues. For many mothers what is truly amazing, is the wordless communication between mother and baby which happens at each feed. Through the baby's saliva, secret messages are passed to the mother. When the mother hears this, her body responds immediately to produce the exact milk the baby has kindly requested. Today, it may contain extra antibodies tailor-made against poor granddad who has a cough during a family gathering. Or tomorrow the gentle communication may request breastmilk containing agents to counteract the big sneeze a little toddler couldn't hold in whilst cuddling the baby.

As the years go on, and science attempts to catch up with identifying new and more profound qualities of breastmilk, we can rest assured, knowing that we have provided what is natural food for babies, with their uniquely changing needs.

Photo courtesy of Emma Bolland





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Photo Lois Rowlands

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La Leche League Philosophy

The basic philosophy of La Leche League is summarised in the following statements:

Mothering through breastfeeding is the most natural and effective way of understanding and satisfying the needs of the baby.

Mother and baby need to be together early and often to establish a satisfying relationship and an adequate milk supply.

In the early years the baby has an intense need to be with his mother which is as basic as his need for food.

Human milk is the natural food for babies, uniquely meeting their changing needs.

For the healthy, full-term baby, breastmilk is the only food necessary until the baby shows signs of needing solids, about the middle of the first year after birth.

Ideally the breastfeeding relationship will continue until the baby outgrows the need.

Alert and active participation by the mother in childbirth is a help in getting breastfeeding off to a good start.

Breastfeeding is enhanced and the nursing couple sustained by the loving support, help, and companionship of the baby's father. A father's unique relationship with his baby is an important element in the child's development from early infancy.

Good nutrition means eating a well-balanced and varied diet of foods in as close to their natural state as possible.

From infancy on, children need loving guidance which reflects acceptance of their capabilities and sensitivity to their feelings.

*The ideals and principles of mothering which are the foundation of
LLL International beliefs are further developed in
THE WOMANLY ART OF BREASTFEEDING 8th Edition*

www.lllgbbooks.co.uk