

Introduction

Prior to researching *The Art of Breastfeeding*, I thought I knew pretty much everything there was to know about the topic. I breastfed all seven of my children, and each brought unique needs, habits and challenges to the relationship. For thirty years, I also have been a teacher of Natural Family Planning for the Couple to Couple League, which has a long tradition of advocating breastfeeding. Certainly, I considered myself to be knowledgeable about breastfeeding.

However, my initial thought that writing this book ought to be a piece of cake vanished quickly as I realized I knew very little of the science behind breastfeeding, especially regarding how breastfeeding impacts women's health. What I learned in my research fully renewed my personal conviction and support for breastfeeding. Breastfeeding, in my opinion, should be front and center with regard to children and women's health issues.

Science has tried to capture the how and why of breastfeeding and much information has come to light that helps us be assured that breastfeeding is absolutely best for babies and mothers. Yet, as with other aspects of the human person, much of what makes breastfeeding the wonder that it is remains a mystery. There are intricacies and interdependencies that even scientists cannot explain; exactly how our human design allows us to feed and nurture our own is just a bit too complex for scientists to fully measure, explain or even replicate.

Thus, breastfeeding is more than mere science; breastfeeding is art. While researchers will always be interested in studying breastfeeding, perhaps in order to change how people can reap breastfeeding's many benefits without sacrifice — my belief is that breastfeeding is a gift God

designed for mothers and babies, one that also benefits fathers and society as a whole.

In recent years, I've had the privilege of watching my grandchildren being breastfed. While their mothers breastfed under different circumstances — one worked full time while another breastfed twins *and* an older baby simultaneously — each of them made breastfeeding work because they were committed to doing what was best for their babies.

I believe that my adult children are able to embrace the art of breastfeeding because they observed me breastfeeding my babies, their siblings. They learned as youngsters the importance of sacrificing for the good of the children and now their efforts are a wonderful model for the art of breastfeeding. It is my hope this book touches other young mothers who will make the choice to practice the art of breastfeeding until their babies lead the weaning process.

More than simply understanding the underlying science, the art of breastfeeding is a developmental process that benefits both mother and baby. After reading this book, I'm confident you will be convinced that breastfeeding is best for all babies everywhere, including yours. I'm also confident as you practice the art of breastfeeding, you will learn its advantages for yourself, your husband, your family and society as well. It is, after all, part of God's design for the human family.

- Linda Kracht

Acknowledgements

I want to take a moment to thank my writing partner and editor, Jackie Hilgert; this book wouldn't have come together as it did without her efforts. We've given birth to this book as a team and upon completion, gained a greater understanding of the weaning process. It was gratifying to work with such a talented individual. I also need to thank Denise Cummings for her research assistance. Patricia Frey deserves credit for helping early in this book's development. Helping in our effort to offer clear and accurate information was Dr. Jack Burnham. Thank you for your careful

review. Finally, a note of thanks to Giselle Alderson, Tom Bengtson and Ann Gundlach for the time they spent reviewing the manuscript.

A note about the cover: Shelly Schwartz of Cincinnati, Ohio, is breastfeeding six-week-old son, Abraham. During labor, Shelly experienced complications that necessitated an emergency Cesarean section; her complications worsened after childbirth and led to massive blood loss. Shelly required an emergency hysterectomy to save her life.

Because surgery left her weakened and apart from her newborn, Shelly was given little hope that breastfeeding would be successful. But with determination and under guidance of supportive medical professionals and lactation consultants, Shelly pumped colostrum every four hours while she recovered in intensive care. Once Shelly and Abraham were reunited: "little Abe has not missed a beat and has been an enthusiastic eater from the start."

Knowing the odds for successfully breastfeeding were stacked against them, Shelly considers their family very blessed. "Not all babies would have responded as well as he did," Shelly said.

After settling in at home, Shelly and her husband, Larry, have focused on developing the breastfeeding relationship. For his part, Abraham is thriving; he's gained, on average, one pound per week.

Shelly and Larry Schwartz are members of the Couple to Couple League.

Please note: For the purposes of this book, "baby" will always be referred to in the male gender.