

# **Mindful Breastfeeding**

*A Mind-Body Approach to Less Pain,  
Less Overwhelm and More Milk*

SAMPLE

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## *Also by Tracy Donegan*

FertileMind - A Mindful Approach to Fertility Challenges

FertileMind App

Mindful Pregnancy

GentleBirth - Your Positive Birth Begins Here

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The Irish Cesarean and VBAC Guide

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## INTRODUCTION

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# What is Mindful Breastfeeding?

Let's face it; breastfeeding can be a bit of a pain getting started but it can be a lot less stressful and dare I say it – fulfilling, a lot sooner than that magical 6 weeks everyone keeps telling you to hold on for. Mindful Breastfeeding is a unique simplified approach to breastfeeding preparation utilizing brain science, mindfulness and the latest research on making breastfeeding and bonding less complicated with an approach known as Biological Nurturing developed by Susanne Colson. What's not to love!

But it's more than about getting your baby fed, it's also a way to intentionally create a nurturing bubble where you and your baby will connect as you nurse together with more comfort, and less pain in those first few important days.

## What It's Not

Unrealistic cheesy positive thinking nonsense.

## Extreme Makeover

Hopefully, you already know your nipples do not need special preparation to breastfeed. No need to toughen them up, moisturize them or scrub them. That bears repeating - your breasts are likely to be perfect just the way they are, and your baby will be equally perfect.

But the brain, and how it approaches breastfeeding definitely needs some upgrading. You update your iPhone several times a year – when was the last time you intentionally upgraded your mind - the most important software in your life. The mental software running behind the scenes is intrinsically linked with how much milk you make, the composition of your milk and how comfortable or painful breastfeeding will be.

Like most people - you probably live 'above the neck' - in your head for most of your life and never learned much about the mind-body connection when it comes to breastfeeding. Doesn't it make sense to make that place (inside your head) as nurturing and gentle as you can during your pregnancy while stacking the odds of having a more fulfilling, enjoyable breastfeeding experience? I think so.

Like many expectant parents you've no doubt spent time, money and effort getting the nursery ready. It's clean, quiet, and decorated with soft pastel colors and furnishings. It feels like a soothing, calming sanctuary to breastfeed your baby. But there's another room - the intangible one between your ears that quite possibly resembles one of those scenes from a hoarding reality T.V. show. You know what I mean.

As much time and effort as you put into creating the physical space for your baby, this inner space also must be prepared. In this book you'll

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discover how this space came to be this way and why ignoring it can make your postpartum more difficult. You'll learn how to renovate it in time for the birth of your baby. Much like those extreme makeover programmes, you've been hoarding certain negative beliefs and attitudes about breastfeeding without even realizing it. If these thoughts, feelings and expectations aren't upgraded, all of that negative clutter ends up burying your maternal instincts, making nursing more difficult on a physical, mental, and emotional level. When you start using the audios and practicing a mindful approach you're clearing the way for more connection, satisfaction, and fulfilment. But don't worry, - transforming that inner room doesn't take much physical effort at all, but it does require consistency. Just bring a curious attitude to what you're about to learn.

Mindful Breastfeeding is based on mindfulness and compassion practices viewed through the lens of evolutionary psychology. Evolutionary psychologists presume human behaviors (including breastfeeding) reflect the influence of physical and psychological predispositions that helped our human ancestors survive and reproduce under challenging conditions.

### **Ten Minutes a Day to Better Breastfeeding**

Download your practice audios now - you'll see that most are quite short - around 10-15 minutes - easy enough to weave into even the busiest days. The Body Scan meditation is a longer practice, but a very important one. Your Practice Mp3s are in two categories – pregnancy and postpartum and are available at: [MindfulBreastfeedingProgram.com/Mp3s](http://MindfulBreastfeedingProgram.com/Mp3s).



## CHAPTER 1

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# Standard Breastfeeding Advice for New Moms

Almost every piece of breastfeeding advice will include some or all of the following;

- It's a learning process – you and baby are learning together.
- Do nothing but rest, eat and feed your baby.
- Keep baby close with lots of skin-to-skin.
- Know where to find evidence-based professional support.

These tips are everywhere. So, you'd be forgiven for thinking that the moms who take this advice to heart will just glide through those early days of breastfeeding - cos well, they 'did all the things' - the books, classes, videos. Even if you have checked all of the 'doing' boxes, the most significant barrier to breastfeeding still hasn't been addressed.

There's quite an obvious elephant in the room – one that most breastfeeding preparation books and classes have ignored.

Your brain.

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Traditional breastfeeding classes will teach you about the intricate, over complicated steps to latch baby on, confusing positions and holds and the first six weeks. The powerful negative feelings that often come up in those early days is never mentioned and how to manage them is even more rare. There's little to no information on ways to help you to help yourself. But those powerful negative thoughts and emotions often derail a mom's intention to breastfeed.

As an example, consider the word(s) you are you most likely to see online from other moms when breastfeeding isn't working - or even words you used if you found breastfeeding tough in the past?

I *felt* like a failure.

I *feel* like a bad mom.

I *feel* like I'm letting my baby down.

I *feel* guilty using formula.

Don't get me wrong - classes can provide beneficial tips and information for new parents but if the *way* you think about those early days of breastfeeding is 'wonky' (more on this later), any problems that arise will feel much more overwhelming. When our thinking is wonky, the brain will find ways for you not to follow those helpful tips. Just to be clear - wonky thinking isn't your fault. You just didn't know that your brain was still running an outdated operating system. Now that you've started this important update you've have the benefit of using lots of new features to make your postpartum a lot smoother. Why keep using outdated, glitchy software that makes life more difficult?

These 'upgrades' are evident in antenatal education too. Research shows that parents using a brain training childbirth education approach, such as GentleBirth, have better outcomes. Parents feel more

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confident in their ability to cope with whatever comes their way on the day. The missing ingredient in traditional childbirth education is also emotional regulation. Are you starting to see a theme here?

Knowledge transfer from books and class instruction isn't enough - experiential learning and emotional regulation are essential.

### **This Book is For:**

- First-time moms planning to breastfeed.
- Experienced moms who attempted breastfeeding previously and it didn't go as well as you hoped.
- Parents of babies who have to go to NICU due to health complications.
- Moms allergic to non-evidence-based fluffy advice on breastfeeding.
- Any mom planning to stop breastfeeding who would like to care less about what anyone else thinks (this isn't your average breastfeeding book).

### **When Should I Begin**

Mindfulness practices are cumulative, so the sooner you begin the more you have to gain. Start as early in pregnancy as you can, so you have plenty of time to unlearn most of the traditional breastfeeding dogma. As you declutter that headspace you'll be increasing your confidence and find it easier to regulate your emotional state during pregnancy. Download your audio practices at:  
[MindfulBreastfeedingProgram.com/Mp3s](http://MindfulBreastfeedingProgram.com/Mp3s)

## I Just Had My Baby

Congratulations! It's never too late to practice self-compassion and self-kindness as you work through any speedbumps in this wild parenting adventure.

*\* You do not have to plan a particular kind of birth to use this approach.*

This is not a Pollyanna positive thinking approach. Throughout, you'll find ways to help you feel good about your breastfeeding journey – whether that's two days, two months, two years (or more).

## My Story

My breastfeeding experience had a difficult start following a 'default' birth at a Californian hospital (standard induction, epidural, vacuum, episiotomy). In those days, babies still went to the nursery and were brought back to mom for feeding every few hours. I didn't mind getting a bit of shut-eye at the time – rooming in wasn't routine yet, so I figured why not take advantage of the free in-hospital childcare services? I'm still not sure that as a standard practice first-time mothers who have difficult births should room in together with their newborn. Leaving a shocked, traumatized mom alone with her newborn isn't Mom or baby *friendly* without adequate staffing to help. Rooming in is part of the Baby-Friendly Hospital guidelines. This is a global program to increase breastfeeding rates (but the evidence that it improves ongoing breastfeeding rates in first world countries is debatable). But I digress.

The baby blues began on day three, the day I was leaving the hospital. I recall being wheeled to the exit while carrying Jack in my arms and

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felt as like I was having an out-of-body experience. "Are they going to let me leave the hospital? Don't they know I haven't a clue what I'm doing?" I honestly thought they were being negligent by letting me leave so soon. I was in a state of panic and overwhelm. There were tears... lots of them. Like many first-time moms, I expected to fall in love with my baby immediately, and my maternal instincts would kick in, and we'd be off to the races. That didn't happen immediately (not totally unusual), so I mistakenly assumed something was wrong with me. I had no idea that maternal instincts are influenced by hormones, culture, genetics, and even the birth experience. None of it was my fault. None of it is your fault, either. I breastfed Jack for six weeks.

I didn't have a breastfeeding 'goal' as such. Like a lot of other moms, I assumed I'd get the hang of it in a few days. My thought process was - "It's natural. This is what women do. Millions do it everyday - of course I can do this." I assumed everything would make sense and come together. I was a 'Type A' mom who wanted to do everything perfectly, but I had no idea how to really help myself. There was never any question in my mind that I wouldn't succeed when I set my mind to it. You might feel similarly - it's a great place to start, so let's build on that.

Any type of maternal instincts were nonexistent, so I just followed the illustrations of the different positions and holds in the books. I was constantly nursing, uncomfortably, in an expensive rocking chair...days and nights were blending together. This definitely didn't look like what I'd seen in the magazines. It was hard. I didn't know it then but what my mind was doing made it even tougher. There's a saying, 'the devil is in the details' but Type A people get so engrossed in the little things that they take on a life of their own and cause us to

lose sight of the bigger picture. Breastfeeding researcher Christina Doonan says “breastfeeding can feel like a core test for good motherhood.” This is how many women feel – it’s how I felt at the time.

## **Expect the Unexpected**

A few months after Jack was born, I heard a phrase that stuck with me – “having a baby is like having an explosion go off in your life.” Yes, that is a harsh picture. I told you this wasn't going to be about naive positive thinking, B.S.

When the smoke clears, you are different, and so is your life and even your relationship with your partner. Your mindfulness practice supports you both during what can feel like quite a chaotic time - what researchers call a ‘predictable crisis.’

Over the years of working with new families, there's been a question at the back of my mind. So, if (new baby = small but powerful explosion) is true for the majority of first-time moms and the rest of the world knows this – why didn't anyone tell ME? Oh, but they did – just not in a way that could reach me at the time...yes there were nuanced suggestions of how sleep-deprived I would be “get all the sleep you can before baby arrives” was the trending advice. I wish someone had been honest with me before I found myself in the aftermath of that explosion desperately hanging on... I wish someone had been brutally honest with me. It might have saved me a lot of mental anguish for myself and my husband – but hindsight is always 20/20 and replaying the 'what ifs' aren't helpful. You're about to go through the most significant adult life transition of your life. Getting breastfeeding established in

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those first 2-3 weeks can be challenging. Mindfulness isn't magic – postpartum will still be intense, but definitely a lot less intense with these skills. Once you get going, it's (mostly) a piece of cake. These mental skills will make any speed bumps you encounter less jolting, making you less likely throw in the towel on the tough days. It takes time to find your feet in this new world, be patient with yourself and your baby as you learn the ropes.



## CHAPTER 2

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# Breastfeeding is Natural

Ironically, society focuses a lot on the 'naturalness' of breastfeeding. Yet, several of the world's most recommended breastfeeding books are about 20,000 pages long (joking... but not really... they're bigger than some of my midwifery textbooks). In resource rich developed countries, women have access to more breastfeeding information than ever before in the history of mankind. Yet in some countries such as the UK, breastfeeding rates are at an all-time low. The unspoken message for women worldwide is that it's 'natural'...kinda. The numbers don't seem to line up with this 'naturalness.' Forget bleeding nipples – your ears will be bleeding from the advice of well-meaning family, friends, and medical staff about trusting your maternal instincts yada yada. But who's helping all of those moms uncover those instincts? I've read a lot of breastfeeding books - almost all claim to teach you *everything you need to know about breastfeeding* but I would wager that if authors included more about emotionally navigating the first few days we'd see a significant increase in exclusive breastfeeding.

When working with new families, I don't mention the 'explosion' that comes with a newborn – I don't want to scare the living daylight out of them. During pregnancy, I help them create a safe container, so

when they arrive home with their new baby, they have the skills and strategies to minimize collateral damage and have a less stressful first few days at home.

## **Emotional Wellness**

Breastfeeding is as much about your emotions as it is about your breasts. Learning relaxation skills is not enough – are they helpful? Absolutely.

Anxiety and depression in the postpartum period are associated with shorter breastfeeding duration, shame and guilt are part of the package. It can feel like they take the baby out and put the shame in. Breastfeeding that is going well is protective of mental health, as are the practices in this book.

Your brain is more than a hub for hormone production – how you use it can save or sabotage your breastfeeding experience.

## **Pretzel Positions and Cirque du Soleil**

Breastfeeding experts around the world agree that current breastfeeding preparation is not just out of date but can *cause* breastfeeding problems. If you took a standard breastfeeding class you will have learned some helpful tips but all of those upright ‘holds’ make breastfeeding more difficult. They increase nipple trauma and make breastfeeding much harder work than it needs to be in those first crucial days. When you’re more confident and baby is feeding well try them out. In the last section of the book you’ll learn positions that can make breastfeeding almost effortless in those early days for you *and* your baby while you

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recover from your baby's birth. These simple postures (rather than positions) are focused on your comfort and using minimal brain power. Isn't it strange that we teach breastfeeding in a bottle-feeding posture – yet moms who bottle feed aren't taught complicated circus contortion feeding postures.

IMHO we don't need any more books on the perfect latch, position or hold. You may have already come across some of them. Rugby, football, cradle, cross-cradle, side-lying, inverted cross-cradle, need-a-gin-and- tonic hold. In the immediate postpartum, your brain doesn't process information in the same way (more on this later). In that first week you're exhausted, your brain feels foggy, your undercarriage hurts (bum and perineum) making sitting up doing the Cirque du Soleil postures and holds several times a night a literal nightmare. Maybe you've had a cesarean, making feeding even more challenging in the beginning. Going through step-by-step instructions – feet on the floor, sit bolt upright, nose to nipple, tummy to tummy, wait for a wide mouth, swiftly bring your baby to you, baby's chin touches breast first etc etc is a sure way to put the brakes on oxytocin. Combining mindfulness and laid-back breastfeeding takes the effort of trying to remember instructions, steps and rules right out of the game. Instead you'll uncover and activate your innate maternal and newborn reflexes and instinctual feeding and mothering behaviors.

Try this experiment: for 1 minute, raise your hands up over your head. Observe how fatigued your arms become. Add a 7lb baby now. It feels a little more difficult, don't you think? It is simpler to feed your infant in a laid-back position during those early days before moving on to the pretzel positions. The pretzel positions will feel easier a little later on without the pressure to get milk into your baby and when your brain

starts to come back online. Remember you're learning how to breastfeed when you're not exactly at your best mentally or physically. In fact we should dump the 'learning to breastfeed' phrase altogether. What I want you to learn is how to activate your maternal instincts and how to trigger your baby's feeding reflexes. To be blunt, traditional breastfeeding instruction feels a bit like learning a new skill while suffering from a really bad hangover (one that lasts for at least two weeks). You simply aren't up to the challenge of this rapid learning curve.

Upright positions may be useful in a couple of weeks when you can remember your name, but not during the initial hours and days. From an evolutionary perspective your comfort is key. Biological Nurturing is a way to improve breastfeeding comfort so you can take care of your baby. Starting out with complicated instruction would be like learning to ride a bike and having someone put you on a unicycle first when trying to remember all the 'to dos' and rules for the ideal latch and position. Perhaps getting on a balance bike might help you gain confidence. The checklist approach to nursing your baby inhibits maternal behavior as it reduces the release of oxytocin.

## **Biological Nurturing – Laid Back Breastfeeding**

In recent years, there has been a growing interest in primitive newborn reflexes. The Biological nurturing (BN) approach, (laid-back breastfeeding) developed by Dr. Suzanne Colson, makes it easier for baby to get a good latch themselves. Nobody needs to grab your boob and push baby's head or neck to latch – these actions inhibit

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breastfeeding. Biological Nurturing is a neurobehavioral approach to breastfeeding that encourages mom to breastfeed in a relaxed, laidback position, like you'd use while watching TV (I call it the Netflix position). It also infers a more relaxed approach by staff too.

Skip forward to the chapter on Biological Nurturing if you're keen to learn more right now. Biological Nurturing is a game changing approach to nursing and bonding with your baby. When I was training as a breastfeeding educator with University of San Diego there was quite a focus on 'building the table' – what that means is grab cushions, pillows, etc so your baby is at breast height to make latching easier. One thing I love about BN is you don't need those cushions or pillows for baby. But you CAN use them for your own comfort. No need for special breastfeeding pillows for baby so your baby bag is also a bit lighter when you're leaving the house.

### **A Breastfeeding Mindset**

To be ready to breastfeed successfully, parents must cultivate a mindset far beyond just having the techniques demonstrated in classes and books. I'm sure you know someone who took the classes, read the big books and hired lactation support yet still didn't reach their breastfeeding goals. From the outside, it looks like they did all the right things – and they did. But from the *inside*, that incredible 3lb pink organ between your ears was never considered part of breastfeeding success in a meaningful way. If breastfeeding success was down to knowledge only every mom would reach her breastfeeding goals – but that's not the case. In survival training books and websites, this point is made repeatedly. If knowledge alone is enough to survive, why have so many people with no survival training managed to survive some of

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the most horrific survival scenarios imaginable (lost at sea... lost in the jungle after a plane crash)? Stay with me; I'm done with the negative imagery now.

Back to that elephant in the room - traditional breastfeeding education isn't cutting it – mental preparation and mindset are crucial.

The good news is that you can control both.

Babies and breasts can be moved. Latch, holds, postures and positions can easily be demonstrated and adjusted if needed. Tongue tie issues can, in most cases, be fixed. So why do breastfeeding rates continue to remain so low in many western countries? We can blame the 'system', the lack of support, and short or no maternity leave, but until breastfeeding professionals include the brain and change how breastfeeding is taught in hospitals, those rates won't improve. It all begins with the brain.

Throughout the book I've included quotes from moms who took part in a mindfulness-based birth preparation course. (Experiences of Postpartum Women after Mindfulness Childbirth Classes: A Qualitative Study 2018) so you can see how this approach works IRL.

*"I was deliberately . . . , and I was doing this most nights, and I'm still doing it, you know, on and off a couple of times a week . . . um, taking lotion or something and just sort of gently going across the scar . . . and when I'm doing that and I'm consciously... I'm very much in the moment, like, "I am standing here, and I am touching my scar, and I'm, like, feeling it." Oh, I'm getting emotional—this is, like, a big thing for me, I guess. Anyway, I do that, and I feel like I'm using mindfulness to reconnect with that part of my body."*

## **Control the Controllables**

We give up so much of our power to others, even complete strangers. For example, if someone gives you the side eye while you are nursing at a coffee shop, you might feel stressed. Will you keep your calm or give it to this stranger? Someone cut you off in traffic, and you swear angrily, once again you gave away your good mood (whether it was justified or not)? The keys to your happiness are in someone else's pocket if you allow events beyond your control to change your feelings or behaviour. Most people would never do that if they had the skills and understanding of how to feel good no matter what's happening outside of you. If you're waiting on the world to change it's behaviour so you can feel good you'll be waiting a long time. Be happy in spite of what the rest of the world thinks - that's true power!

## **Have a Happier Postpartum**

Learning how to meditate doesn't mean trying to stop your thoughts, long spells of chanting or turning vegan. It's about noticing your thoughts, where your mind goes when it thinks you're not looking... and how you react to those thoughts and the emotions that follow. You don't need a special cushion to be mindful - it's a way of being. Most of my meditation practice takes place sitting in my bed soon after waking up. If I'm particularly sleepy, I'll get out of bed and sit in a chair in my room.

You'll learn how to cultivate a new approach to breastfeeding, such as non-judgment, patience, and acceptance resulting in more peace, clarity and compassion for yourself, your baby and your partner.

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Research suggests there are a host of wonderful benefits to meditating, but here are some of the more subtle effects I see with many families I work with:

- The ability to not to get anxious or dread your baby waking up to the nurse at night.
- The ability to feel more balanced, more connected, less reactive around your partner - and less snarky about who's more exhausted.
- The ability to feel more positive and hopeful about breastfeeding and less stressed if things get tricky.

Mindful meditation positively changes the parts of the brain associated with positive mood (that part of your brain grows bigger when you meditate). The parts of your brain that activate the stress response when your pediatrician says your baby isn't gaining enough become less activated and, in some cases, gets smaller. Did you know a study by Williams, Grenon, Aglipay, & Plint in 2014 found that more than 71% of both practicing pediatricians and obstetricians felt they had little or no breastfeeding education or training and consequentially lacked confidence in counseling their patients on infant feeding choices. Think of the Mindful Breastfeeding approach as a mental fitness program, and just like going to the gym, the more consistent effort you put into your training, the bigger the benefits. When you go to the gym, you can see the physical changes in the muscles. Still, unfortunately, we can't pop the top of our skull off to see what changes are happening under the hood, but as you start to feel more at ease in your day-to-day life and can sweat the small things less, you'll know that your mental muscle is getting a good workout.

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Other benefits include the ability to:

- Reduce pain and inflammation.
- Increase your sense of control and well-being.
- Improve sleep.
- Bring awareness to negative thinking patterns that make your breastfeeding experiences more difficult.
- Reduce feelings of sadness, disappointment, and frustration if you're experiencing breastfeeding difficulties.
- Connect with your body and baby on a deeper level.
- Learn strategies to help you manage the strong emotions of postpartum in a nurturing, compassionate way.
- Reduce relationship stress.
- Positively impact your mental and physical health as a new parent.

Certainly, no one can guarantee that what you're learning in this book will crack the code and guarantee you'll reach your breastfeeding goals. But by taking an intentional, active part in your emotional wellness by preparing for breastfeeding in this way leaves less room for disappointment and anxiety and more room for fulfilment and joy.



## CHAPTER 3

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# Factors Contributing to Continuing Breastfeeding in Early Postpartum

First off, let's focus on what you do have control over (controlling the controllables).

- Education of mom and partner (classes, books, videos, advice from other breastfeeding moms).
- Support – hospital staff, partner, birth and postpartum doula, peer support groups, online forums, friends/family, IBCLC (if complications arise outside the scope of the above supports).
- Confidence in your ability to breastfeed (high self-efficacy). If you have this you're more likely to breastfeed exclusively – and for longer. It shouldn't be surprising that a confident mindset or anxious mindset will impact your experience. But that confidence doesn't come out of thin air. Education and positive support will all contribute to a smoother postpartum, but you can intentionally cultivate that confidence, even before your baby is in your arms. But it's such an intangible aspect it

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doesn't get as much airtime as it should. Like happiness – confidence is an inside job, it comes with experience. And that's the rub. How do you get that feeling of confidence before baby arrives? Appropriate education combined with mindfulness is associated with higher self-efficacy. It's also useful to know that your brain can't quite tell the difference between something you're physically doing right now and an experience you're vividly imagining, visualizing or even remembering. Spend some time during your pregnancy mentally rehearsing the feelings associated with a positive breastfeeding experience. Practice mentally creating those feelings of pride, accomplishment and warm snuggles with your baby as often as you can. Mentally rehearsing in this way changes your expectations and builds confidence.

Research suggests that breastfeeding confidence is likely to be influenced by four main sources of information:

1. Past positive breastfeeding experiences.
2. Vicarious experiences (e.g., watching other women breastfeed).
3. Verbal persuasion (e.g., encouragement from friends, family, and breastfeeding professionals).
4. Physiological responses (e.g., pain, fatigue, stress, anxiety).

Relaxation techniques will only get you so far. Early postpartum is hard for most. The key to getting through any stressful situation is your ability to be aware of, and respond intentionally to negative thoughts and emotions. Your ability to notice how an 'untrained' mind can sabotage your breastfeeding experience is crucial to your ability to

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survive the first few days of breastfeeding and to get to that point where it's fulfilling and enjoyable (most of the time). And who's to say breastfeeding won't go well for you – and when it does, the exercises and practices in this book and accompanying audios will still be a nurturing presence in your life. Between weaning, potty training and toddler taming, you'll have lots of opportunities to put your new skills into practice in the future. One thing is for sure, long after your breastfeeding journey has ended, life will keep surprising you with challenges.

### **Common Factors Contributing the Discontinuation of Breastfeeding**

1. Perceived low milk supply.
2. Nipple pain.
3. Mother's preference.

Mindful meditation impacts all these barriers, including a 4th factor specific to the U.S. – the abysmal lack of maternity leave that forces many newly postpartum moms back into the workforce as early as four weeks postpartum. Incorrect advice from professionals can also unintentionally derail breastfeeding.

### **A Breastfeeding Mindset**

A mindset is a filter through which we see the world that divides people into growth or fixed mindset. In her book, 'Mindset,' psychologist Carol Dweck suggests that success comes from having the right mindset rather than intelligence, talent or education. People with a

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fixed mindset *believe* they're born with certain intelligence, skills and abilities that cannot change.

For a mom with a fixed breastfeeding mindset, your self-talk or conversations with others might go something like this:

- *I'm no good at this – I can't see this getting any easier.*
- *I'll try breastfeeding and see how it goes.*
- *It's not good for both of us to feed all the time. I can't get anything done.*
- *John needs to bond with Amy too. He's missing out.*
- *My baby seems to be hungry even after a feed. I'm probably not making enough milk.*
- *I have a low milk supply.*

"If I can't get this to work, it's never going to work, so what is the point? I'm a bad mom."

Naturally, these thoughts spin off into "I'm failing my baby", and instead of focusing on the activity of breastfeeding being difficult right now – Mom has internalized I AM A FAILURE. I am unworthy. I'm a terrible partner etc etc. That downward spiral continues.

Here's an example of a mom with a more growth mindset:

- *This is so hard today, but everyone said these few days could be tough, so we're just going to take it one feed at a time.*
- *These night feeds are killing me – I need to find a way to get more rest.*
- *I am so tired... the sooner we get this figured out, the sooner we can all relax.*

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- *I'm going to get some help today to ensure we're all on the right track.*
- *Today was so much better than yesterday. Maybe we're getting the hang of it after all.*

Those with a growth mindset understand that most people can rise to almost any challenge with support, persistence, and the right attitude.

A classic growth mindset statement is something like, "I just have to keep doing this because I know it is best for my baby, and I really want it to work. For moms with a classic growth mindset, the idea of "failure" is just not an option but without the skills to manage their emotions even the most positive growth mindset isn't enough.

Chances are, if you've made a point of purchasing this program and taking the Laid Back class, you lean towards a dominant growth mindset but even the most persistent, committed mom can despair at 3 am from pure exhaustion and frustration. It's helpful for partners to understand the differences in mindset and help you stay on track for those tough nights in the beginning. We also need partners to be in a growth mindset as much as possible over the first 2 weeks.

Even if you realize you have quite a fixed mindset, your mindfulness training helps you ease into more of a growth mindset by paying attention to your self-talk.

Not sure what your breastfeeding mindset is? Try this exercise. Grab a piece of paper and write as many ideas that pop into your head.

Example: Breastfeeding is - important but hard to get going.

**EXERCISE:**

1. Breastfeeding is \_\_\_\_\_
2. Breastfeeding is \_\_\_\_\_
3. Breastfeeding is \_\_\_\_\_