

# The Nursing Mother's Companion, Third Edition, 1995

Book Written by Kathleen Huggins

On the whole, this book provides a rather comprehensive coverage of breastfeeding facts, related concerns and recommended solutions for the expectant as well as nursing mother. The major drawback though is that it is not recent enough. Last edited in 1995, and given that a lot more research and studies have been conducted since then, some of the information provided, especially those medical-related, is not the most up-to-date and totally relevant to today's context. Therefore the reader will have to take these information with a pinch of salt and make a conscious effort to find out more from the latest publications. Apart from that, the practical advice provided are still very much valid.

This book is organized into seven chapters in chronological sequence. It takes the reader through the various phases from antenatal preparation to nursing the older baby and toddler, classifying each phase very aptly as 'off to a good-start' for the 1st week, 'learning period' for the 1st two months, 'reward period' for two to six months when the breastfeeding routine has been established, so on and so forth. What I find useful is the whole range of possible concerns specific to each phase about both the mother and baby that the author describes and the detailed troubleshooting tips and treatment methods offered for each concern. I have to admit that I actually did benefit from the troubleshooting guide as I was experiencing trauma from a recent episode of plugged duct while reading the book. There is one controversial tip given though, which condones bottle-feeding for convenience, as opposed to cup-feeding, for a baby who refuses to latch. I personally believe that this would aggravate the problem further by introducing nipple confusion, which was noted but apparently deemed not to be a concern.

To complete the spectrum, there is a chapter dedicated to addressing concerns about nursing for mothers with medical condition as well as babies with special needs. Full-time working mothers who wish to continue nursing their little one can look forward to having their doubts cleared in the chapter &dash; Travelling together, Being apart.

What I particularly like about this book is its introduction, which highlights to the reader, very succinctly, the critical success factors for sustainable breastfeeding. These factors, I feel, will serve as the guiding light for mums keen on breastfeeding and they are:

- Commitment of the mother
- Confidence that comes with good knowledge and information
- Support from loved ones and/or community
- Guidance from knowledgeable others
- Reassurance from those who have been through it and succeeded

Last but not least in the introduction, the author also emphasized the emotional driver for continued breastfeeding beyond the first months as the immeasurable joy, which I can relate to, that mum and baby derive from the breastfeeding relationship once it has been established. This is over and above the many health benefits that mum and baby stand to gain. Indeed a very positive way to end an introduction!

The other strength of the book worth highlighting is the first chapter - on antenatal preparation. The author did not forget to prepare the expectant mother for the unexpected - that breastfeeding, natural as it may seem, does not necessarily come instinctively for all mothers and babies. It is an acquired skill for both mum and baby and takes some practice to master, which new mums tend to overlook. There is also very detailed information provided on antenatal breast and nipple examination to detect and address potential nipple problems upfront, rather than realizing and scrambling after delivery to resolve such issues.

Reading this book from the standpoint of a mother with 13 months breastfeeding experience, I find that I am able to relate to and sometimes echo the views of the author. Just to cite an example as an illustration, the author mentioned in Chapter Five &dash; Travelling Together, Being Apart &dash; under the section 'Returning to Work or School' that: "Many mothers who work outside the home or attend school feel that breastfeeding offers emotional compensation for the hours that must be spent apart. The security of your breast comforts the baby and helps make the time you are together special and regarding for both of you." As a mother whose work can be hectic and demanding at times, I cannot agree more with this statement. I personally feel that without breastfeeding, it would not have been possible to maintain the special relationship that both my son and I share given my long working hours.

To sum up, this book covers a wide spectrum of topics in reasonable detail and is definitely worth consideration as a breastfeeding reference guide to own for a nursing mother.