Book Review

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Breastfeeding Without Birthing: A Breastfeeding Guide for Mothers Through Adoption, Surrogacy, and Other Special Circumstances

Alyssa Schell, MS, IBCLC © 2013 Praeclarus Press, 242 pages, paperback, \$15.95

Available from: <http://praeclaruspress.com/books/breastfeeding-without-birthing/>

Breastfeeding Without Birthing is a uniquely inclusive and sensitive book written for adoptive mothers, intended mothers of babies via surrogacy, foster mothers, nongestational lesbian mothers, relactating mothers, and exclusively pumping mothers who are interested in breastfeeding. From the start, author Alyssa Schnell identifies that “. . . this is not a well-worn path, but it is one that you and I will travel together.” Ms. Schnell is an IBCLC, an accredited La Leche League leader, and breastfeeding mother of three children: two by birth and one through the profound gift of adoption. Using her own story, and the stories of many nonbirthing mothers, she warmly and informatively guides mothers on their own path to breastfeeding.

This book is written to meet two simultaneous needs: those of physiology or “how-to” and those of the heart. The author first invites her readers into an understanding of the importance of breastfeeding for all babies, particularly those whose attachment has been disrupted: a fact that she suggests holds true, at least to some degree, for all mothers who intend to breastfeed without birthing. The book is then divided into three sections: I. Creating Your Support Network, II. Latching—Nurturing at the Breast, and III. Making Milk—Nourishing From the Breast. Ms. Schnell identifies a rich body of evidence to enable mothers to be physiologically successful at both making milk and nurturing their babies at the breast. She provides this information in an organized and easily accessible format while simultaneously tending to the deep heart needs

facing many mothers who breastfeed without giving birth: those of criticism from others, experiences of grief, and expectations of mothering success. In short, the book reads at times like a textbook with (for the most part) exemplary photographs, tables, and figures and simultaneously like the words of a knowledgeable and tender friend.

The author honors and respects the unique circumstances that breastfeeding without birthing entails. She is forthcoming of the need to respect the legal and hospital policies that impact her readers. I particularly appreciated her sensitivity to the needs of birth families and her advice in navigating the time and place for breastfeeding in the midst of such unique and fragile circumstances.

Ms. Schnell beautifully blends encouragement for mothers to set goals and empowers them with resources to meet them with threads of her sensitivity to the process and “honoring [of] the transition.” “Meet your baby where she is and travel as far along the path to attachment and breastfeeding as is possible.” As an adoptive mother of an exclusively breastfed premature baby, I highly recommend this book as an unmatched resource for mothers interested in pursuing breastfeeding without birthing. I also feel privileged to include it in my professional library as a maternal child healthcare provider and believe the perspective offered within its pages are of great value to anyone caring for potential breastfeeding without birthing couples.

Megen Kuhn, RN, MSN, graduated from Messiah College in 2003 and began her career as a Neonatal Intensive Care Nurse at the Women and Babies Hospital in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. Her passion quickly grew and became focused on guiding mothers through the heartbreak of separation and intensive caring, through the arduous task of lactation maintenance, and on to eventual breastfeeding.

In 2009, after the death of their own NICU baby, Megen and her husband pursued adoption. After months of dreaming, praying, and pumping, another premature daughter was born to a beautiful birth mother who graciously gave Megen the gift of adopting and nursing their little 32 weeker.

Megen went on to achieve her Master of Nursing in Integrative Health from West Chester University. She continues to work as a bedside NICU nurse, specializing in NICU lactation support and cue-based/infant-driven feeding.

IOM Report on Social Determinants of Health

The Institute of Medicine has released a report entitled *A Framework for Educating Health Professionals to Address the Social Determinants of Health*: <http://www.nationalacademies.org/hmd/Reports/2016/Framework-for-Educating-Health-Professionals-to-Address-the-Social-Determinants-of-Health.aspx>. Educating health professionals in and with communities negatively affected by the social determinants of health can generate awareness among those professionals about the potential root causes of ill health, contributing to more effective strategies for improving health and health care for underserved individuals, communities, and populations. This report describes a high-level framework for educating health professionals, aligning education, health, and other sectors to better meet local needs in partnership with communities.

Infant Bottle Size and Weight Gain Study

The journal *Pediatrics* has published the article “Bottle Size and Weight Gain in Formula-Fed Infants,” presenting findings from a study of 386 infants showing that feeding a baby with a bottle larger than 6 oz is associated with gaining more weight and larger weight-for-length than feeding with a smaller bottle: <http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/early/2016/06/03/peds.2015-4538?sso=1>