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# The Importance of Breastfeeding and the Evolution of Women's Rights

Being a woman in an “equal” society isn’t always as “equal” as it is made out to be. The evolution of women's rights has not yet reached the act of parenting. Women are expected to change the way they parent in efforts to avoid making others uncomfortable or to keep themselves from feeling uneasy in a public setting. The act of breastfeeding, a natural way for a woman to nurture her child, should not be something that they should be forced to censor in public.

Breast milk is said to be the best nutritional option for an infant. The long term effects of breastfeeding are astonishing for both mother and child. Breast milk can serve a baby with extra protection against infections in the urinary and respiratory tracts, it reduces runny stool and it lowers the risk of SIDS(Sudden Infant Death Syndrome). Individuals who were breastfed are at less of a chance of developing allergies, diabetes and obesity throughout their lifetime. The breast milk is also easier for an infant's digestive system, so it decreases the chance of constipation and diarrhea. The effects of breastfeeding do not stop at just the child, breastfeeding increases the release of oxytocin.

The extra production of oxytocin allows the mother to feel more relaxed and calm. The extra release of hormones produced could reduce the risk of postpartum hemorrhaging(bleeding in the uterine which could be potentially life threatening) and postpartum depression. Nursing can reduce the risk of breast, uterine and ovarian cancer. Breast milk is uniquely suited to fit the nutritional needs of both baby and mom. Breast milk is made up of 75% proteins, fats, carbohydrates, minerals, and vitamins that are all vital to the growth of an infant. Not to mention everything is all natural and you never have to worry about whether your baby is getting the proper nutrients that it needs. Formulas are made up of dilutents, animals fat based products and stabilizers. Formula is not a bad thing to nurse your child with, but is it the best way to fulfill your child’s nutritional needs? No.

Most women who do breastfeed result to breastfeeding when home and pumping, then when in public giving their child formula from a bottle. But why must a women feel as though she is wrong for nursing in public? Simply because there are people who find it indecent, that a woman should have enough respect for herself and the others to cover up or just not do it at all. Since the beginning of our lives as women we were taught that is was morally wrong to expose ourselves in such way, in other words that it is “unlady like” to reveal ourselves in such manner.

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A case in North Carolina occurred when a mother was breastfeeding her child in the courtroom during a custody battle when the judge asks her to leave the courtroom and cover herself up. The infant who was unaware of why he was no longer being fed then began to fuss and cause a distraction to everyone, but the judge in the courtroom. When the mother spoke to reporters she states she did not know what to do. She was left in a state of shock and she felt as if she was neglecting her hungry child. Rather than shaming a woman for giving their children the best nutritional option as possible, we should embrace it. If it makes you uncomfortable seeing a woman feeding her child, then it is simple do not look. When it comes to an infant you cannot just wait until you are in a setting which is “appropriate” to feed your child.

The needs of an infant are simple eat, sleep, poop, repeat. The proper diet of an infant who is being breastfed should consist of 8-12 feeding times a day. So basically a woman who is breastfeeding should expect to remove herself from an event 8-12 times a day in order to appropriately feed her child. This year the 49th and 50th state enacted the law that protects women who are breastfeeding from charges such as public indecency and nudity. Meaning that women are allowed to freely breastfeed wherever they would like. The law that protects women is called the “Breastfeeding Anti-Discrimination Act” and it was passed June 24, 2014.

Breastfeeding is natural and a part of life, women have been doing it literally since the beginning of time. There were no bottles or formulas that substituted breastfeeding. As time went on society strayed away from breastfeeding due to it being indecent in some instances and while not everyone feels as though it has a greater impact on their child evidence shows how much more a baby can excel when they are breastfed rather than bottle fed. The first milk that a woman begins to produce is called colostrum and it can be produced 16-20 weeks into a pregnancy. As a woman begins to breastfeed it increases the flow of colostrum. Throughout the first few days(3-5) the milk begins to go through a transition into mature milk. Labor automatically causes a hormonal shift in a woman’s body to help prepare her for the effects that breastfeeding will have on her body. The pituitary gland releases a hormone called prolactin which allows your glands in your breast to then begin to produce milk. So if the human body begins prepping a woman for their pregnancy, then why should anyone be ashamed to breastfeed in public? They should not. Women should spend more time doing what they know is right for their child, rather than what is “morally” right for everyone else.

Change is not something that comes over night. This is something that will take time in order for women to ever feel completely comfortable with breastfeeding in public. Seeing women breastfeeding in public is a common thing now. Sensory is now simply a thing of the past. So when in a public setting when you see a mother feeding her child in public and it makes you feel bashful then walk in an opposite direction and mind your own business. Breastfeeding in public is not an uncomfortable topic that we should talk about and make the younger generation aware that breastfeeding not inappropriate.

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