

My Breastfeeding Journey.
Pip Wheelwright



Back in 1998 my son Harry had a very traumatic birth by emergency caesarean. Although the hospital staff were brilliant, the support for breastfeeding wasn't. The nighttime midwife on the ward took one look at me and remarked, "it won't work, you know, too flat chested." I resolved that night to make it work, whatever the cost, especially as we have a history of bad asthma and allergies on both sides of our family.

When Harry was six weeks old, I attended my first La Leche League (Bromley and Bexley) meeting with a friend. We walked out of that meeting saying, "We will never feed our babies when they are that big!" My determination to breastfeed paid off and Harry proved both me and the midwife wrong by breastfeeding happily until he was two years old.

My husband was diagnosed with testicular cancer when Harry was 20 months old and after treatment we were told the prospect of having more children was incredibly slim. Then suddenly, to everyone's surprise and delight, six years later, I fell pregnant with Alfie, who was born, via VBAC (Vaginal Birth after C section) with forceps in 2005, I suffered 3rd degree tears. Unfortunately I still did not get the breastfeeding support I deserved from the hospital staff.

Sadly my dear Mum died when Alfie was just four weeks old and my Dad had recently suffered two strokes. Caring for my Dad (with other family members) and a newborn was very difficult, but thankfully breastfeeding posed no great problems for a second time running. We muddled through and I was so grateful each night for our quiet times together to nurse and cuddle through my grief.

I arrived at my first LLL meeting in some years (Bromley and Bexley) when Alfie was five weeks old. I was craving some light relief from the busy times with Dad and my life in general, and the feeling of coming home and belonging was an emotional relief that just felt right. It helped me to focus on others and allowed me to help where I could. It was something positive while I was grieving. I have made a close group of friends through LLL and we continue to help each other through our ups and downs. I will always be grateful for the support LLL gave me over the years, and for the friends I have found through becoming a Breastfeeding Mum.

Over the past year or so, coming into contact with lots of children's toys, it struck me that it is commonplace for role play toys that involve feeding babies to come equipped with bottles. Noticing this gap in the market every time I went shopping or, as I watched Alfie nursing his soft toys, I decided to create a doll to promote breastfeeding as the norm, as well as one that children could have fun playing with. I hope my dolls may help our future generations realise they do have a choice how babies are fed.

My educational dolls involve the use of totally secure, hidden magnets, at key points throughout the bodies, which enables them to kiss, hold hands, cuddle and breastfeed. The effect gives the child a magical visual image of the Mother and baby bond of breastfeeding! With clean facial lines (and no external attachments, therefore less fiddly for role play) and all the child sees, is the happy smiling faces of the Mother and Baby dolls.

I'm really proud now that my project is nearing fruition and special sets are currently being made via a long standing America & Canadian toy manufacturer, with the help of their long established links in China.

I like to think of the set as a nice keepsake for after our nursing times are long gone to help me remember our special breastfeeding time together. The dolls would also be a fantastic present from a new baby to an older brother or sister... then as Mum and her newborn baby nurse, while the older sibling plays alongside feeding his or her own "baby" with its own Breastfeeding Mum. Everyone's a winner & after all happy children in turn create happy parents! and viceversa.

To find out more information about "Boobie Buddies" Educational Magnetic Breastfeeding Dolls contact me at pip.boobiebuddies@ntlworld.com or visit the small website at: www.boobiebuddiesbfdolls.co.uk