The Breastfeeding Partner
How Dads and Other Special People Make a Difference!

Acknowledgement of Privilege and Bias
I have attempted to make this presentation as open and inclusive as possible, but acknowledge that I am and this presentation are “works in progress.” For example, most of my photos and all of my videos represent the breastfeeding partner as a white man even though not all breastfeeding partners are white and not all breastfeeding partners identify as men.

Acknowledgement of Privilege and Bias
I welcome feedback on any aspect of this presentation so I may do better in the future.

Outline
- Who is the breastfeeding partner?
- Why is the support of the breastfeeding partner important?
- Addressing common concerns of the breastfeeding partner
- Enjoying the benefits of breastfeeding
- When there is no partner

The Breastfeeding Partner Is…

The Breastfeeding Partner Is…

Father
Mother
Grandparent or close friend helping with the parenting responsibilities
Partners can have a strong influence on whether mothers choose to breastfeed (HHS, 2011).

When fathers were given a 2-hour presentation on how to support breastfeeding, the mother was 1.8 times more likely to initiate breastfeeding. (Wolfberg et al., 2004)

Partners can have a strong influence on the duration of breastfeeding (HHS, 2011).

When fathers were educated prenatally about overcoming common difficulties, mothers who experienced difficulties were nearly 5 times as likely to be breastfeeding at 6 months. (Pisacane et al., 2005)

What will my role be in feeding my baby?

Will I be able to bond with my baby if I am not directly involved with feeding?

Will my baby’s mother be able to complete household tasks if she breastfeeds? (HHS, 2011)
The Partner’s Role in Breastfeeding

- Offer Encouragement
- Get Educated
- Accept the Commitment
- “Preserve, Protect, and Defend”
- Assist with Breastfeeding
- Nurture the Nurturer
- Provide Practical Help
- Document Breastfeeding

The Partner’s Role in Breastfeeding

What are some ways you have experienced the support of the breastfeeding partner?

Offer Encouragement

- Tell her he believes in her
- Tell her she is doing an amazing job
- Tell her she can do it!

Get Educated

- Attend a breastfeeding class as a couple
- Know the resources….and be willing to use them

Ryan Clip #3c, Josh Clip #16
Get Educated

- Attend a breastfeeding class as a couple

Know the resources

- ...and be willing to use them

Accept the Commitment in the early days

Time Commitment

Emotional Commitment

(and possibly also) Financial Commitment
Accept the Commitment in the early days

Accept the Commitment in the early days

Protect her against criticism
Tell others how proud he is of her
Act as a gatekeeper when she needs privacy

“To Preserve, Protect and Defend”

Support nursing in public

Kevin Clip #9a, Kevin Clip #7b
Assist with Breastfeeding

- Create a nursing nook
- Be there to help
- Burp
- Wash breast pump parts
- Filling, assembling, and cleaning at-breast supplementers
- Be the left brain to her right brain

Assist with Breastfeeding

- Be there to help
- Watch for hunger cues

- If needed, pull down on baby's chin

- If needed, pull baby's hands away
Assist with Breastfeeding

- Be there to help
- Massage plugged ducts

Assist with Breastfeeding

- Help baby suck video

Assist with Breastfeeding

- Burp

Assist with Breastfeeding

- Wash breast pump parts

Assist with Breastfeeding

- Filling, assembling, and cleaning at-breast supplementers

Breastfeeding is a right-brained experience

But when things get complicated... The partner may need to be the left to her right
Nurture the Nurturer

Anticipate basic needs
Respect her needs regarding touch
Recall her "5 favorite things"

Nurture the Nurturer

Anticipate her Needs
- Eating
- Sleeping/resting
- Taking a shower
- Exercising
- Leaving the house
- Being alone

Nurture the Nurturer

Respect her needs regarding touch.

Nurture the Nurturer

Recall her “Five Favorite Things”

Practical Help

- Cooking
- Cleaning
- Diaper changing
- Bathing baby
- Care for older children
Practical Help

- Or arranging for outside help

Document Breastfeeding

- Mothers who end the breastfeeding relationship without any photos of them breastfeeding often regret it.

Common Concerns of the Breastfeeding Partner

- What will my role be in feeding my baby?
- Will I be able to bond with my baby if I am not directly involved with feeding?
- Will my baby’s mother be able to complete household tasks if she breastfeeds?

(HHS, 2011)

How the Breastfeeding Partner Attaches

- Without feeding baby

Breastfeeding Helps Mothers to Connect with the Babies
The hormone of calm and connection.

[Moberg, 2003]

Increased in both mother and baby by breastfeeding.

[Moberg, 2003]

*Nursing: Oxytocin's Starring Role*

Also increased by:
- Close body contact
- Massage
- Social interaction
- Laughter

[Moberg, 2003]

Babywearing

Co-Sleeping

Co-Bathing
Infant Massage

Skin-to-Skin

Play

How the Breastfeeding Partner Attaches

By helping to feed baby
The best way to start breastfeeding is exclusive breastfeeding.

**In General**

- When mother is unable to breastfeed
- Illness or injury
- Severe nipple damage
- Emotional difficulties

- When supplementation is necessary
- When both parents are sharing the nursing relationship (co-nursing)

**When Is Helping to Feed Baby Helping?**

- Using bottle-feeding techniques that support breastfeeding

**Co-Nursing**

- What will my role be in feeding my baby?
- Will I be able to bond with my baby if I am not directly involved with feeding?
- Will my baby’s mother be able to complete household tasks if she breastfeeds?

(HHS, 2011)
Breastfeeding and Household Tasks

Breastfeeding is not likely to impact mother’s ability to do household chores

Although being a mother may!

Not Breastfeeding Creates More Work

Enjoy the Benefits!

Not Breastfeeding Makes The Partner’s Life Harder

Ryan clip #2b, Shawn clip #5b
After The Early Days

Emotional
- Not breastfeeding increases risk for postpartum depression
- Mothers who don’t breastfeed get less sleep (Kendall-Tackett et al., 2011)

Time
- After the first 5 weeks, breastfeeding takes less time than bottle-feeding (Mohrbacher & Kendall-Tackett, 2010)
- Not breastfeeding means more doctor visits and missed days of work
- Purchasing formula, preparing and cleaning bottles takes time

Financial
- Cost of formula and bottles for the first year: $800-$3200 (kellymom.com, accessed 2016)
- Increased medical costs for mother and baby when mother doesn’t breastfeed
- More days of missed work when mother doesn’t breastfeed

“Honey, Do Your Magic!”

Inviting the Partner In
Support for Partners

- Talk with other partners about breastfeeding

When There is No Partner

- Or when the partner returns to work
- Or when there are extra needs

Extra Support
Breastfeeding Partner
- May be new to new mother and infant care
- Emotionally involved
- Often sleep-deprived and exhausted

Postpartum Doula
- Trained and experienced in new mother and infant care
- Not emotionally involved
- Not depleted

Postpartum Doula
May do many of the same things the breastfeeding partner does
- Change baby's diapers
- Help care for older children
- Do some housework and cooking
- Nurture the new mother

Postpartum Doula
May also draw on her training and experience to
- Show the new mother how to wear her baby
- Show the new mother how to bathe her baby
- Give her ideas for getting more sleep
- Listen to her birth story
- Give breastfeeding guidance
- Connect mother with other resources in the community

In Conclusion
A successful breastfeeding experience supports the entire family, and partners really appreciate it!

Postpartum Doula
And although postpartum doulas often attend mothers when the partner is away, the partner may also draw on her training and experience to
- Show the new partner how to wear their baby
- Show the new partner how to bathe their baby
- Give the partner ideas for getting more sleep
- Connect the partner with other resources in the community

Kevin Clip #9b, Shawn Clip #5e, Ryan Clip #4
In Conclusion

Now for a little fun with the breastfeeding partner!

Dad Labs Video

Thank you!

Alyssa Schnell, MS, IBCLC
www.SweetPeaBreastfeeding.com