

Breastfeeding Grief and Trauma

When breastfeeding does not go as we had expected or hoped, it can come as a huge shock and have a **profound emotional effect on us**. For a whole range of reasons, breastfeeding is not always straightforward. When breastfeeding doesn't turn out as expected, **it is never the mother's fault**. Mothers who want to breastfeed are let down by a society which does not recognise breastfeeding as important and **fails to recognise the feelings women experience** when they struggle to breastfeed.

Why do some women struggle to breastfeed?

- [Reasons for low milk supply](#)
- [Breastfeeding and Hypoplasia/Insufficient glandular tissue](#)
- [Breastfeeding and Polycystic Ovary Syndrome \(PCOS\)](#)
- [Breastfeeding after breast surgery](#)
- [Breastfeeding and implants](#)
- [Breastfeeding and thyroidism](#)
- [Breastfeeding and thyroid problems](#)

Bottle and alternative feeding tools

- [Bottles and other tools](#)
- [Infant formula and bottle feeding](#)
- [Video on paced bottle feeding](#)
- [Responsive bottle feeding](#)

Barriers to breastfeeding

Even without physical barriers to breastfeeding, **few of us start breastfeeding with much understanding of how breastfeeding works**. Because the UK has one of the lowest breastfeeding rates in the world, many women have never seen a baby being breastfed before they give birth to recognise the nuances of comfortable positioning and attachment or understand how milk production works. Women often find themselves in pain and unsupported to resolve it. We are often shocked by the intensity of normal new-born behaviour and receive conflicting advice about when, how, and how often to feed our babies. Often those around us are not equipped to support breastfeeding because they never breastfed themselves or have limited understanding of how breastfeeding works. Unsurprisingly, **women find themselves in unfamiliar territory**, with little support around them, to help get breastfeeding established.

- [Barriers to breastfeeding](#)
- [Barriers for young mothers](#)
- [Removing breastfeeding barriers](#)



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When breastfeeding does not go as hoped

Women are often told “it doesn’t matter” when breastfeeding does not go as they hoped, but it can **feel as if it matters very much indeed**. Women can experience a huge range of feelings, from **relief to disappointment through to grief and psychological trauma**. “Why Breastfeeding Grief and Trauma Matter” by Prof Amy Brown gives a voice to many women who stopped breastfeeding before they were ready. Some reported feeling emotionally destroyed, crushed or broken by the experience, angry and shocked, a sense of injustice, feeling like a failure, feeling guilty and ashamed, feeling let down, envious of those who can breastfeed, and feeling lasting regret. **All this is a normal response to a profound loss**, demonstrating the depth of the pain which women may feel on the loss of breastfeeding. If you are experiencing these feelings, you are not alone, and your feelings do matter. Research shows that women who stop breastfeeding before they are ready are at a higher risk of postnatal depression.

When breastfeeding has not gone as we had hoped, **it can be helpful to think in more detail about why it mattered to us so much**. This can be painful, but it is an important part of healing from breastfeeding grief and trauma, because recognising the reasons we wanted to breastfeed can help us understand our feelings. So, why does breastfeeding matter to women? Because many women want to breastfeed! We all want to offer the best possible nutrition for our babies, but breastfeeding is about far more than our baby’s health. It is a bodily function, instinctive reproductive behaviour as mammals, a bodily right, or a rite of passage. **It is a way of mothering**. We may have imagined breastfeeding since we were young children. We may feel that it is the unique way in which we want to provide close physical contact with our baby. With all these complex and profound factors at play, **it makes sense that the emotions some women feel when breastfeeding does not go as planned are equally complex and profound**.

- [Healing breastfeeding grief](#)
- [Why breastfeeding grief and trauma matter](#)

Mental health support resources

- [Sadness and depression during and after weaning](#)
- [Oxford Parent Infant Project](#)
- [The Motherkind Café Postnatal Wellbeing Support Group](#)
- [Oxfordshire Talking Therapies](#)
- [PANDAS PND Awareness & Support](#)
- [Breastfeeding and perinatal mental health](#)

Pregnancy after a previous difficult feeding experience

- [Breastfeeding, Take Two: Successful Breastfeeding the Second Time Around](#)

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