

PUMP STATION



A ZINE ABOUT
ONEWOMAN'S
EXPERIENCES
BREASTFEEDING
& PUMPING

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I have tried to relate my memories of my experiences as best as possible, while Adam, not having been at particular places when certain things happened is creating images as best he can to relate those experiences visually and readably. In order to maintain anonymity in some instances I have changed the names of individuals and places. I also may have changed some identifying characteristics and details where needed.

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INTRODUCTION

I first started making a list of places I've breastfed a few months into becoming a mother. I don't remember why, but it just seemed like an interesting thing to document. I found myself in so many unusual places and circumstances, that it was often comical (although usually in hindsight, not always in the moment). I know this isn't a new concept: there are many discussions, online posts and groups, funny photos, and books dedicated to this idea. I told my husband, Adam, about the list and he, being an artist who makes comics, suggested that it would be a good idea for a zine. The more I thought about it, it seemed like a cool way to express my creative writing interests and collaborate with Adam.

I originally titled the list "Weird places I've breastfed or pumped." But turning it into the zine, I wasn't sure if I wanted a "weird places" category or not. Are any of these weird? Is the entire list weird? Or should the message be that none of them is weird because it should be socially acceptable to breastfeed/pump anywhere? This list and what has turned into this zine then, is more of a cathartic, personal journey, documenting my own experience. It represents both physical and mental spaces, spanning a year of my life in which I shared my body with my child (who had already spent 9 months inside of me to begin with). I didn't realize that it was documenting my transition to motherhood, my attachment to my child, and my navigation of how we are separate but interdependent individuals.

Breastfeeding and pumping are loaded (literally and metaphorically!). The phrase is "breast is best." The American Academy of Pediatrics calls it a "public health issue, not a lifestyle choice" and recommends "exclusive breastfeeding for about 6 months, followed by continued breastfeeding as complementary foods are introduced, with continuation of breastfeeding for 1 year or longer as mutually desired by mother and infant."¹ Research shows that breastfed babies have lower risks of asthma, leukemia (during childhood), obesity (during childhood), ear infections, eczema, diarrhea and vomiting, lower respiratory infections, Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS), and Type 2 diabetes.^{2,3} And breastfeeding leads to lower risks of type 2 diabetes, certain types of breast cancers, and ovarian cancer^{4,5} in mothers.

While I do believe in the obvious benefits of breastfeeding, there is so much baggage, pressure, and whatever else that society puts on women and mothers around this issue. It can help or hinder parent-child attachment. It can mitigate or worsen maternal anxiety and/or depression. It physically changes a woman's body, which can impact not only how she sees herself, but also how her partner or others see her: for better or for worse. It

can be a personal choice individualized to each woman's or family's desires and needs. But the act also depends on so many factors, ranging from the child to access to educational resources to individual, physical, or personal circumstances. So that it often actually doesn't mean a choice. Even breastfeeding advocates no longer advocate for the "breast is best" messaging.

I was never one of those women who loved breastfeeding, which is probably why I started this list and eventually made this zine. I would occasionally get those lovey-dovey feelings (thanks Oxytocin!) and I'm so glad that I was able to do it for as long as I did. But I was also always hungry, usually in pain (constantly applying Lanisoh, tea bags, heat pads, and/or freezer bags to my nipples), and often inconvenienced. I can't tell you how many times that I said "Forget it, I have to stop, this is too hard!" And then I'd reach another stage and be like, "I can do this a bit longer" (Like Kimmy Schmidt turning that crank for just 10 more seconds).

As I said, this zine is my personal experience. I recognize that while some women may see themselves here, many others will not and are not represented. As Anne-Marie Slaughter states in *Unfinished Business*, "I cannot escape my own origins and life trajectory; I am both privileged and white." Yet even with all of the supports I had, it was still hard!

There is no universal definition of "successful" breastfeeding. Medical providers are often not very informed when it comes to breastfeeding and pumping, and there is no combined effort in the medical field to follow-up and support those who are breastfeeding, let alone supportive workplace conditions and policies. Racial and ethnic minority women continue to have lower breastfeeding rates than white women.⁶ And women of color report many barriers to breastfeeding, such as not receiving much information about breastfeeding from their OB/GYNs, Baby Friendly hospitals rarely being in communities that service these pregnancies, not enough certified lactation consultants who are reflective of the population most at need, working in sectors that have not been known to be lactation-friendly (retail, food service, etc.), and minimal or non-existent maternity leaves, just to name a few.

I am not claiming authority over the issue beyond my own personal experiences, but I want this zine to be an invitation to other women to talk about their experiences because hearing from other women was essential to making my breastfeeding work. And I want this to be an invitation for men to talk about their own experiences or learn something new and be able to participate, support, and/or join in the conversation.

-ALF 2018

In the Hospital

The first time breastfeeding was pretty immediate. The nurse and our doula helped us initiate breastfeeding & our initial skin to skin.



But as the day went on it got harder...

I was confused and tired. Because Cora was born 3 weeks early, she was technically a pre-mie (by a day), so they did ALL these tests,



including monitoring her blood sugar. She kept scoring borderline low and so they put us on this crazy schedule of feeding and retesting her levels every few hours. So that first night, we

kept getting woken up and none of us got to enjoy much sleep. They wanted us to supplement with formula and threatened the NICU.



We wanted her to breastfeed exclusively but wanted her to be with us more (not 3 floors below), so we gave in to giving her formula. Luckily, she maintained her weight, and we were discharged. We would still have to supplement with formula until her weight gain was confirmed but at least she was breastfeeding, too.

Back at Home

Breast feeding is TWO people (you and the baby) but for us it was THREE (thanks to Adam).



The first night home was hard as we still had to do the intense feeding schedule. We hardly got any sleep and we had to take her to the pediatrician the very next day. We met with a lactation consultant there (number 2), who watched a feeding and reassured me that she was doing okay. We were having to come back in the next day for another blood test (she had scored a concern for jaundice again), so the lactation consultant encouraged us to get off the crazy schedule and just breastfeed for 24 hours. By the next day, Cora had gained 5 ozs within 24 hours! We were in the clear not to come in again until her one-month check-up.

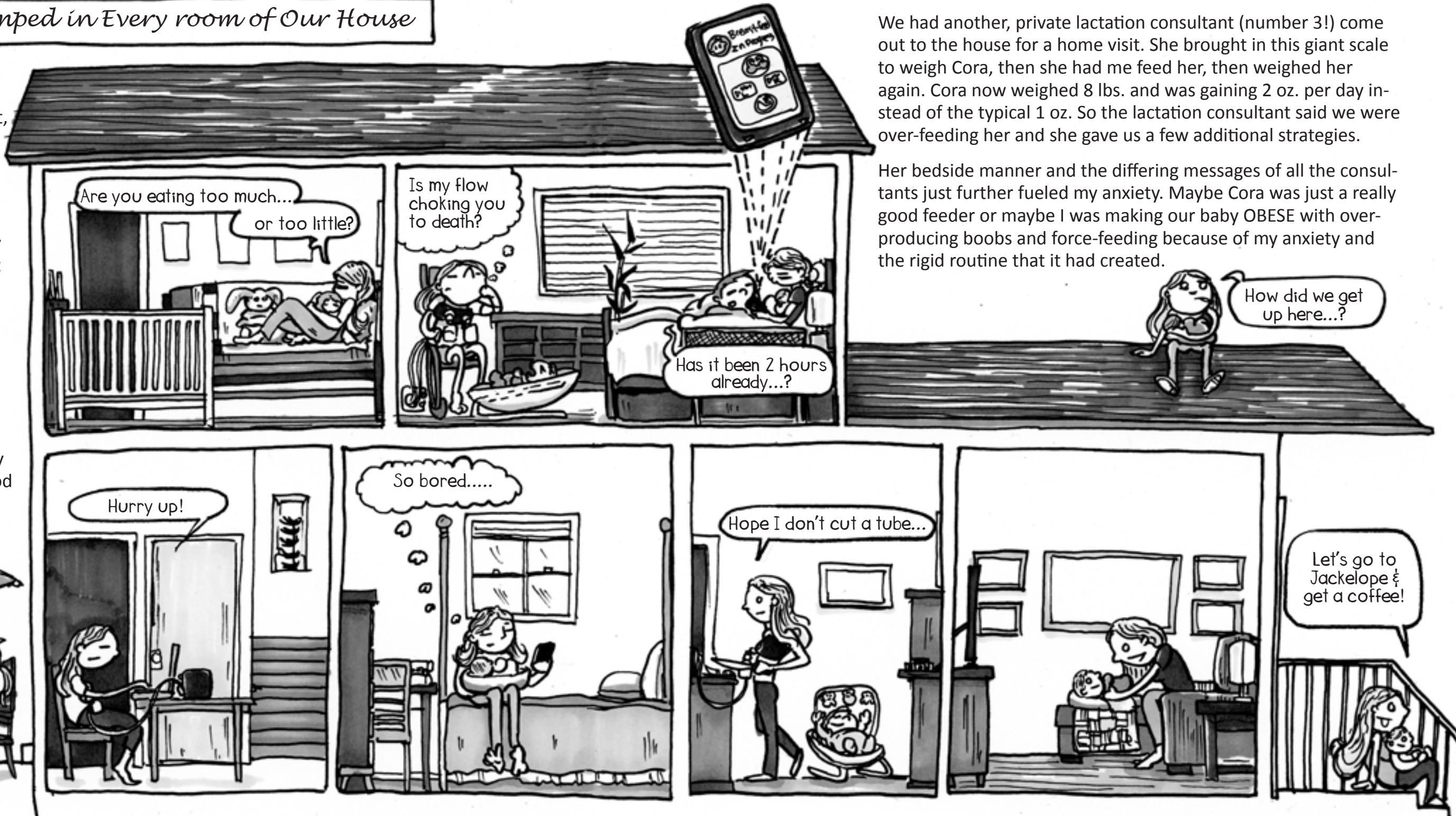


Breastfed & pumped in Every room of Our House

The first 6 weeks were so hard! The two of us were just figuring each other out, and I had so much anxiety over feeding.

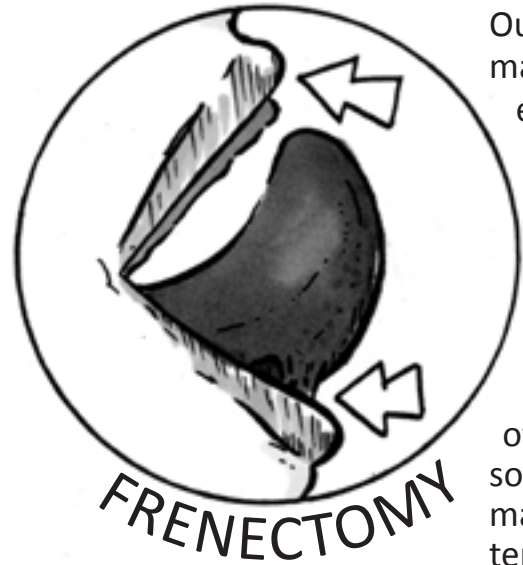
She had a "bad latch," and her tiny mouth didn't always stay on well. So many professionals said, "Well, it shouldn't be PAINFUL!" But it WAS. And practically every other mom, was like 'oh yeah, it's painful' (at least the first few weeks).

At least I was one of the lucky ones. I heard stories of other moms with bloody nipples worried about blood getting into their milk.



We had another, private lactation consultant (number 3!) come out to the house for a home visit. She brought in this giant scale to weigh Cora, then she had me feed her, then weighed her again. Cora now weighed 8 lbs. and was gaining 2 oz. per day instead of the typical 1 oz. So the lactation consultant said we were over-feeding her and she gave us a few additional strategies.

Her bedside manner and the differing messages of all the consultants just further fueled my anxiety. Maybe Cora was just a really good feeder or maybe I was making our baby OBESE with over-producing boobs and force-feeding because of my anxiety and the rigid routine that it had created.



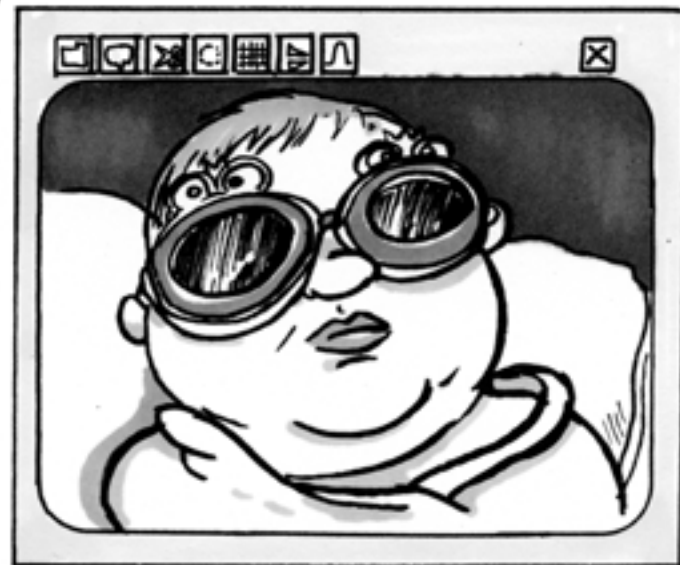
Our home lactation consultant was the first to suggest that Cora may have a shortened lip and/or tongue attachment. I had never heard of such a thing, but we consulted the “googles,” our friend who was a doula, our pediatrician, and the lactation consultant there (number 2 - who I loved).

It turns out it’s actually a thing.

Cora’s doctor recommended a pediatric dentist who happened to be at the children’s dentistry practice that was started by one of my supervisor’s dad, which made us feel better. He started it to be very kid-focused, and his practice pioneered lip/tongue attachment correction surgery- frenectomy. He even made appearances on Oprah. At 6 weeks I took her to get snipped. Adam had to teach and couldn’t go, so my friend went with me because I was so nervous about the logistics of getting a baby out of the house, into the car, and across town by myself. The procedure went fine and I felt silly that I had been so nervous. We had to apply Vitamin B12 to the wound 3 times a day, but it didn’t seem to hurt her.

At the Dentist’s Office

He even made appearances on Oprah. At 6 weeks I took her to get snipped. Adam had to teach and couldn’t go, so my friend went with me because I was so nervous about the logistics of getting a baby out of the house, into the car, and across town by myself. The procedure went fine and I felt silly that I had been so nervous. We had to apply Vitamin B12 to the wound 3 times a day, but it didn’t seem to hurt her.



Still the next 2 weeks after the procedure were awful. It was like starting all over again. Cora had to re-learn her “new” mouth. We had to put off introducing the bottle & pacifier, and when we finally did, that changed things up again.



But then we finally got into a relative rhythm and things evened out a bit....

“There are times in the middle of the night when I’m feeding you, and all is quiet, and you’re making your gentle noises and your dad is lying next to us... It’s so nice even if I’m exhausted. And when I pick you up to burp you, and you look so satisfied with closed eyes, I just want to squeeze you tight.”

But then my maternity leave was nearing an end and it was time for me to go back to work.

I was equal parts looking forward to going back and dreading it.

I love my job, and it would get me out of the house, but the idea of the planning and logistics totally overwhelmed me at first. Luckily a co-worker had sent me a tip sheet on pumping at work before I gave birth that helped me out.



The Lactation Room at Work

I was always pumping in there. It was small, kind of dark, and not easy to move around with all of your equipment, but it was more accommodating than a lot of workplaces. It eventually got renovated, but not until I was done breastfeeding, so I never got to enjoy the more luxurious space. I became an expert at multi-tasking: maximizing my time, chatting and brainstorming with my co-worker who was also pumping in the next booth over, and participating in meetings by phone (across the country, across the state, across Chicago, or even across the hall).

I had to call my friend and former co-worker who had a (now) 3 year old to vent and ask questions about breastfeeding, pumping, and transitioning back to work. Watching her back then, I had always thought it was so manageable, but actually talking through it with her, turns out, it's just hard all around.



One day, working from home when we didn't have child care, I did a conference call, typing and taking notes with one hand, while breastfeeding with another. It was difficult to balance the responsibilities of both at once, but I was lucky to work for a place that understands the importance of balancing a home/work life; especially for new moms

But do you think we're getting too in the weeds?

What's the guidance on blending and braiding funding teams???



Working from Home

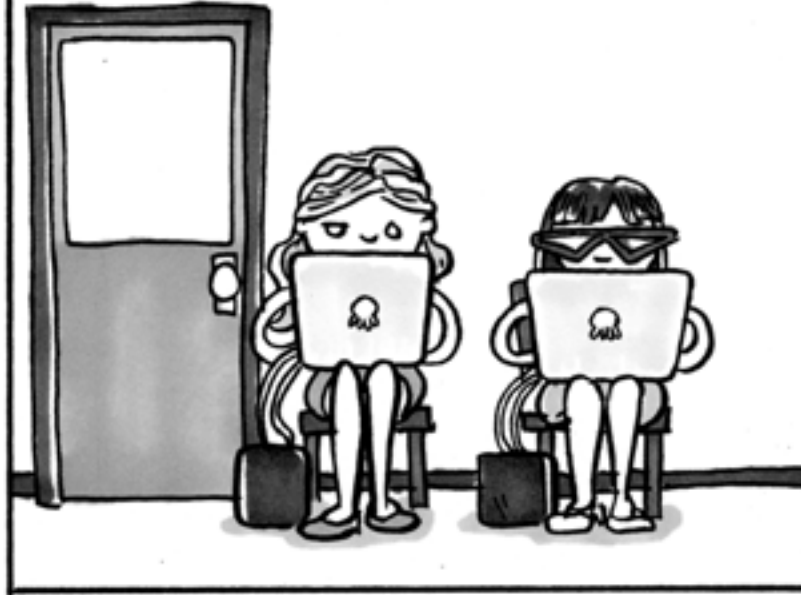
Working Off-site

Hauling that pump (along with my regular bag, my laptop, and usually my lunch) all over the city was ridiculous! It was so HEAVY!

I had to call places ahead to make sure they had rooms in which to pump, and I had to plan meetings and travel time around my pumping schedule.



I pumped at a Homeless Shelter after giving a presentation with my friend/co-worker who also was pumping.



Being out on public transportation turned pumping into a massive logic puzzle. I had to strategize around how many bottles I would fill up and what to do with them. How long would I be out? How long would the ice pack last or would I have access to a mini-fridge? How can I keep track of used versus sterilized nozzles? Am I going to be able to have a microwave to clean things?



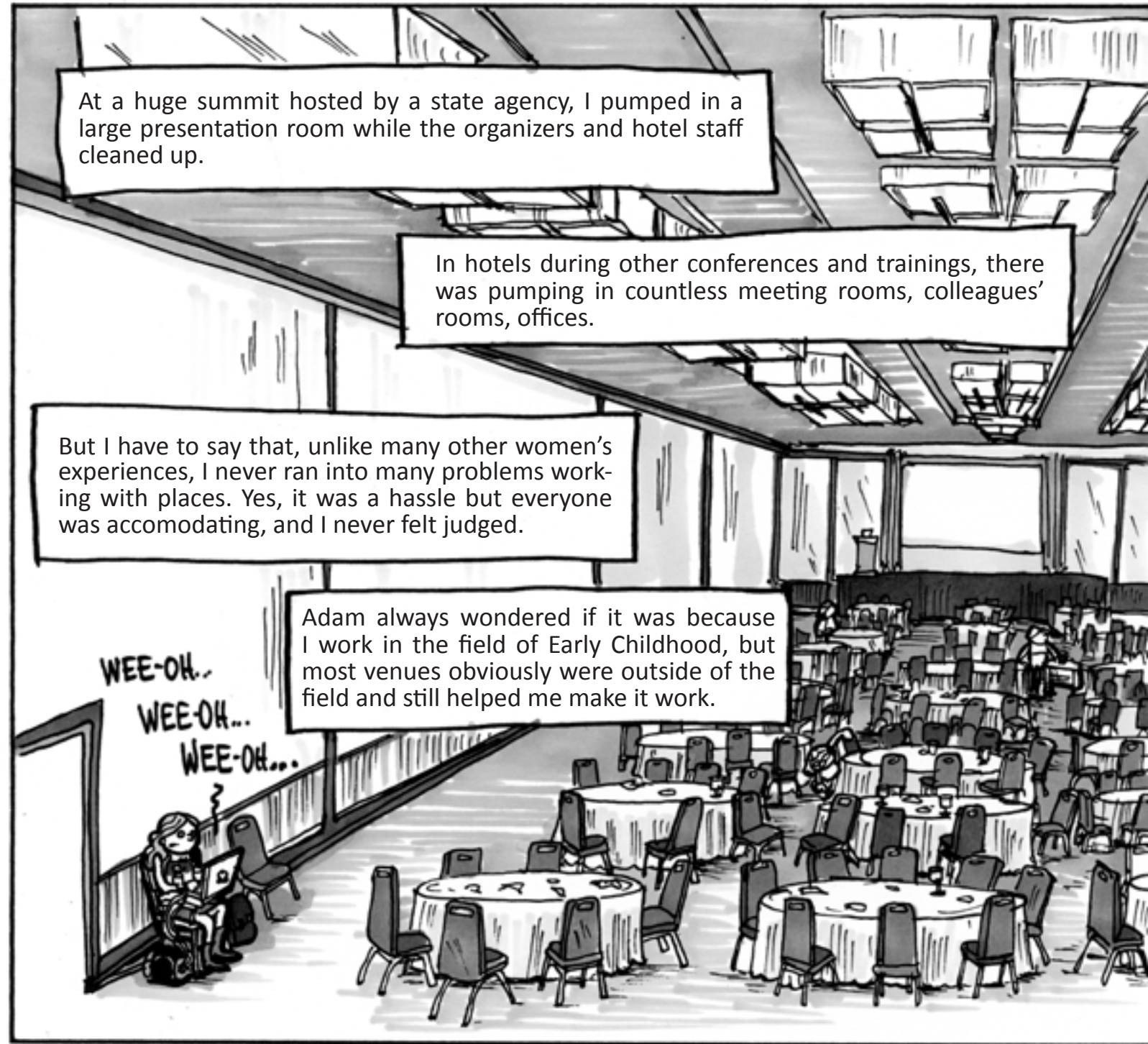
At a huge summit hosted by a state agency, I pumped in a large presentation room while the organizers and hotel staff cleaned up.

In hotels during other conferences and trainings, there was pumping in countless meeting rooms, colleagues' rooms, offices.

But I have to say that, unlike many other women's experiences, I never ran into many problems working with places. Yes, it was a hassle but everyone was accomodating, and I never felt judged.

Adam always wondered if it was because I work in the field of Early Childhood, but most venues obviously were outside of the field and still helped me make it work.

WEE-OH...
WEE-OH...
WEE-OH...



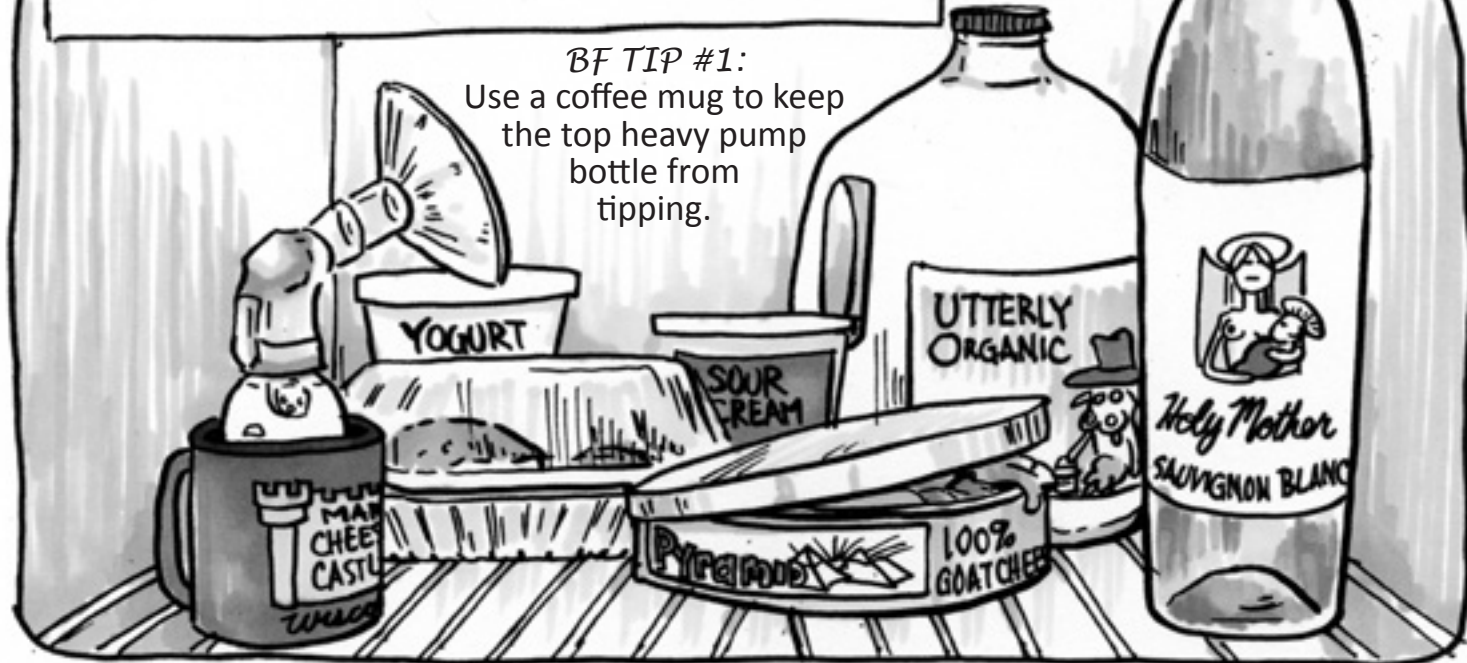
Going Out, Hanging Out and Letting Them Out: Having a Social Life?

When I stayed inside to breastfeed during parties at our place (because of the noise), I always wanted to hear what was going on.



Come on, come on, Cora...

I pumped during our Wines of the World party and stored breast milk in our friend's fridge before heading home.



BF TIP #1:
Use a coffee mug to keep the top heavy pump bottle from tipping.

Going to see Abbi Jacobson from *Broad City* sign books at Women and Children First bookstore, I had to pump in the bathroom while on the toilet out at dinner.



Why is this taking so long?!
I'm so hungry!

Why is it so HOT?!

How is this SANITARY!?!

It was sometimes stressful to go out, but I knew I had to get out of the house and be a person, too. Connecting with people helped me get out of my own head space.



And going out with Cora was mostly easy. Breastfeeding at brunch at Nana's, a neighborhood restaurant with our other friends who were soon to be expecting was delightful.



The Great Outdoors: Breast feeding at Lake Front Parks in Chicago

Our Friend's Birthday Picnic



When we saw Dolly Parton at Ravinia, I pumped on the Lawn to *Nine-to-Five* (okay, she didn't play that until we were leaving, but it would have been appropriate...)

Dolly Parton was somewhere in the distance.



31st Avenue Beach



One day when Adam insisted I get out and have a day to myself during my maternity leave, I pumped with my handpump in the DSW parking garage...it was only weird when some guy did a double-take.



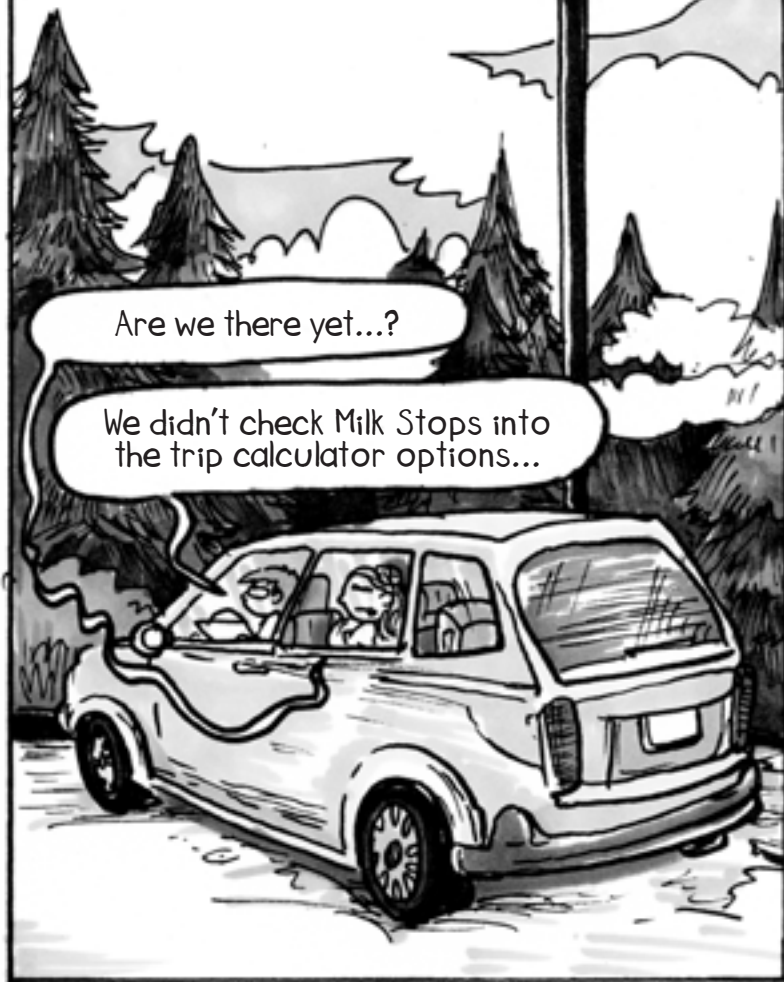
In the Car

I breastfed and pumped in our car more times than I can count. On long trips and short trips. I never got a car adapter for the electric pump, but made it work on the road.

If only we could SNEAK into the Creation Museum! I wanna see dinosaurs but not give the museum money.

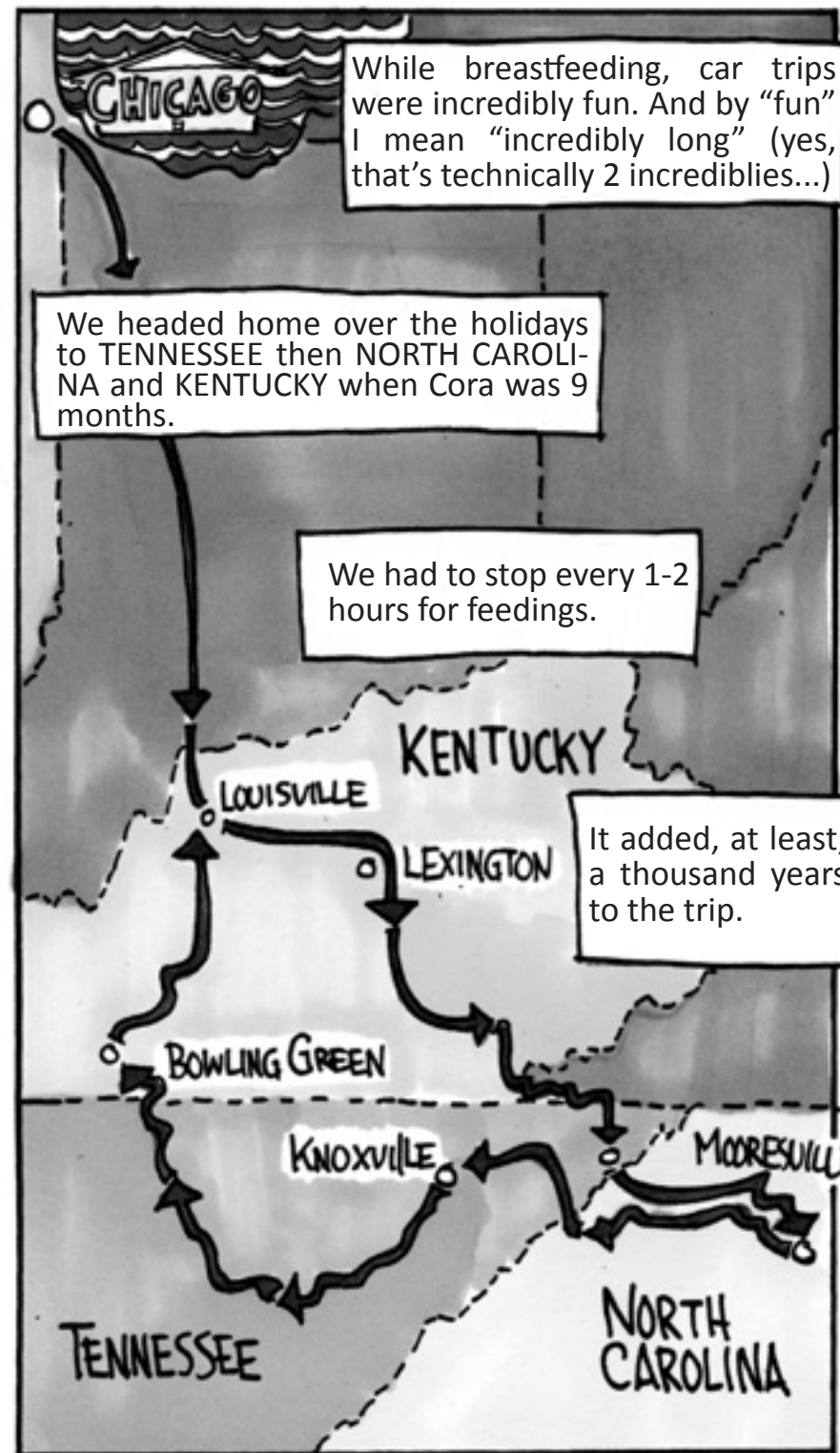


On the Road



Are we there yet...?

We didn't check Milk Stops into the trip calculator options...



We headed home over the holidays to TENNESSEE then NORTH CAROLINA and KENTUCKY when Cora was 9 months.

We had to stop every 1-2 hours for feedings.

It added, at least, a thousand years to the trip.

Since I was still pumping while we were bottle feeding at that point, we had to make sure hotels had fridges, and Adam had to sterilize all the bottles & pump parts ritualistically.



And once the milk was "processed," we had plenty of diapers to change. It's amazing how few places have changing tables on the road (and practically non-existent in male restrooms) and how ill-considered they were.



GUESS YOUR WEIGHT, MA'AM?

I will destroy you...

Up, Up in the Air: Traveling by Plane

Isn't Trish coming on duty soon???

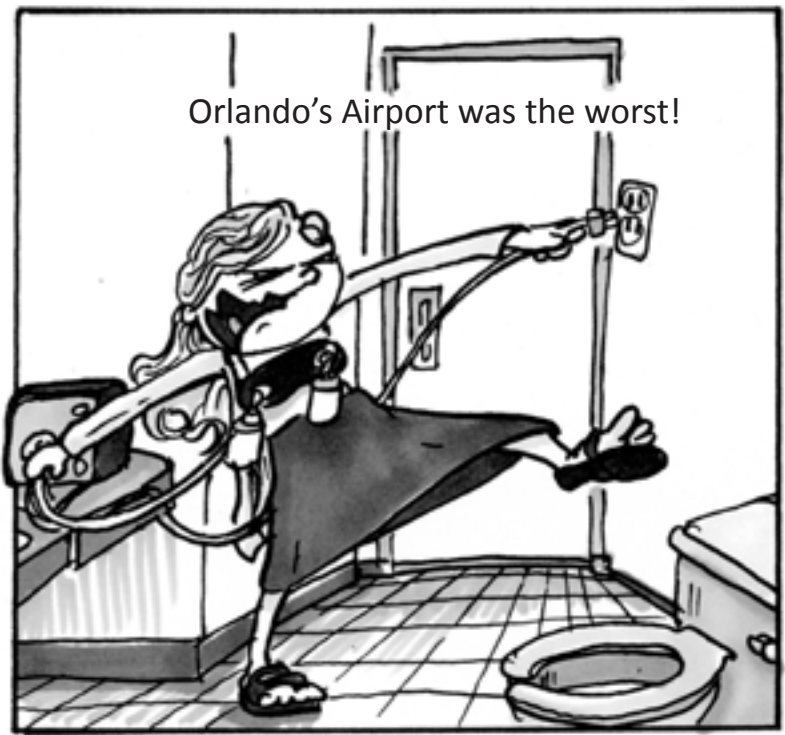
She says it came from her *BODY*, sir...

I didn't want my breast milk going through X-ray screening, so it had to be hand tested. Somehow it was actually always by men, and they had varying levels of comfort dealing with it.

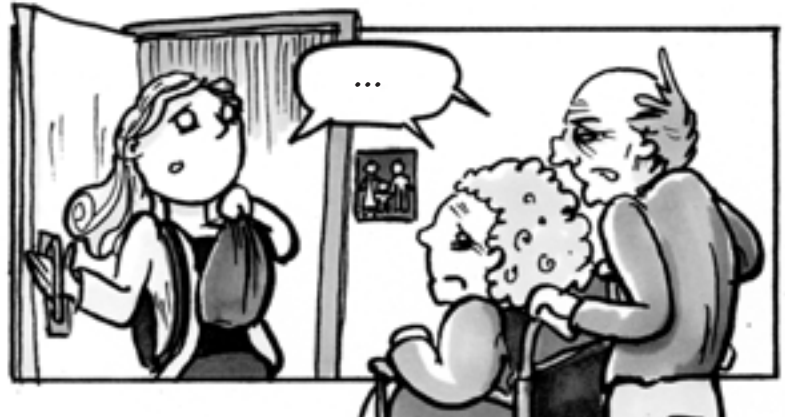


While traveling, I found that airports have varying degrees of concern for providing legally required space for nursing mothers.

Orlando's Airport was the worst!



The Family Restroom was the only option. Not only was it horribly inconvenient, but I unknowingly made a poor lady in a wheel chair wait for 15 minutes while I pumped...



The Mother's Room at Midway Airport was very clean & convenient.

I'm finally like those models on the side of breast pump boxes...

I CAN have it all!



I've just never SEEN one before!

One guy tried to take apart my pump to inspect it, thinking it was the cooler bag. But he was totally comfortable and not embarrassed when I corrected him.





On the plane breastfeeding helped keep Cora calm and pop her ears during take off and landing.



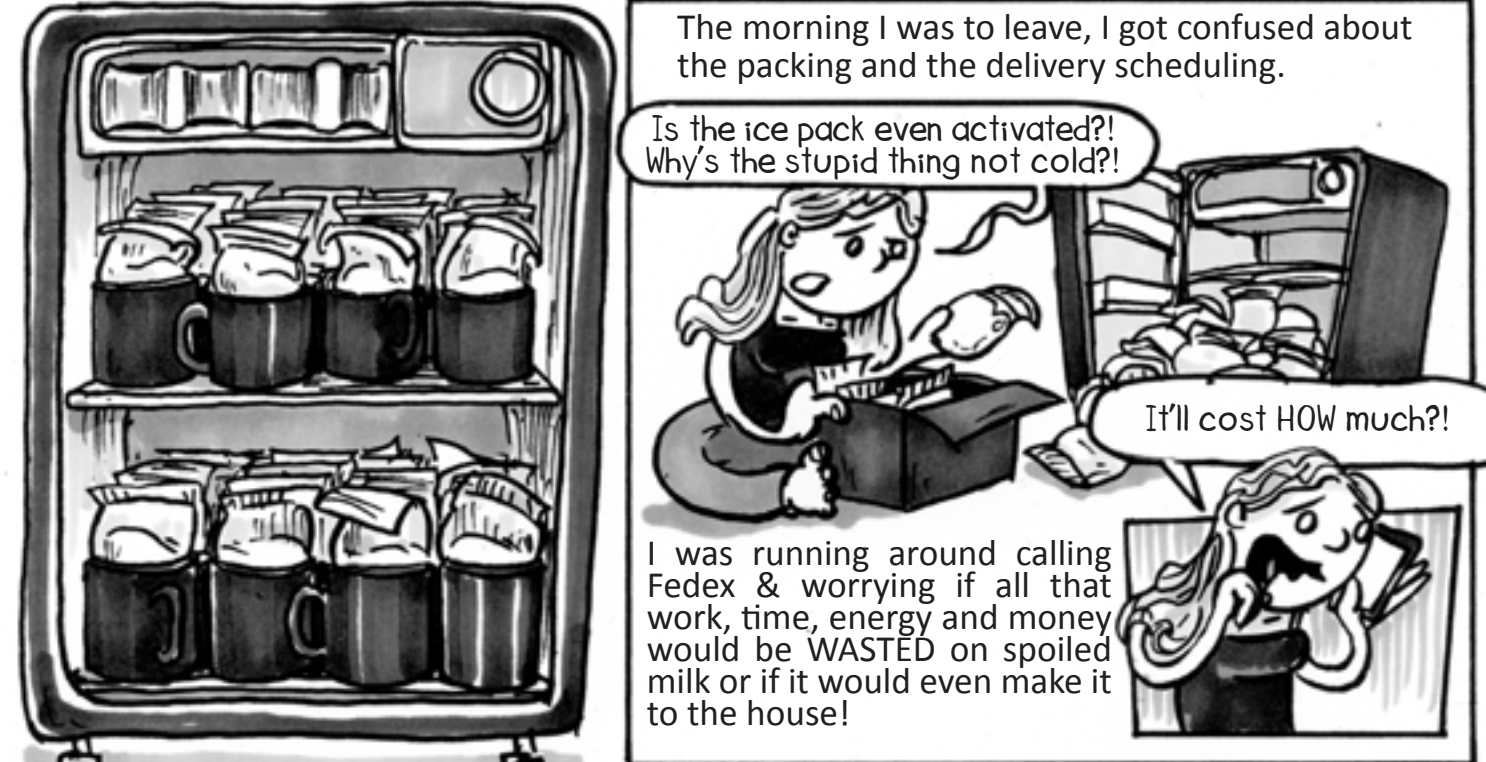
The Great Blue Yonder

I pumped when I was with her on planes, too, and when I traveled without her.



Milk in Transit

One conference that I went to had me away from home for four days. While I was pumping to keep up my supply, I didn't want to waste the milk, so I paid for a service to mail it back home when I left.



The morning I was to leave, I got confused about the packing and the delivery scheduling.

Is the ice pack even activated?!
Why's the stupid thing not cold?!

It'll cost HOW much?!

I was running around calling Fedex & worrying if all that work, time, energy and money would be WASTED on spoiled milk or if it would even make it to the house!

Emergency Feeds

Once, when I cut my finger while cooking, we had to run to Mercy Hospital, not knowing if I needed stitches.

Adam stayed with Cora in the car because we didn't want to bring her into the hospital, but it ultimately took so long that he had to run her in to feed as I was finishing up. No stitches, just super glue, or the medical equivalent.



Another time Cora threw up after a nap, so we took her to the emergency room since she wouldn't eat or drink. In the parking lot right before we took her in, she finally breastfed, and we knew she was okay- so we didn't actually have to go in.



The height of my anxiety breastfeeding was surprisingly not at these emergency feeds. During emergencies something kicks in, and I'm actually calm (which was helpful since that's when Adam freaks out the most). My most anxious times were unpredictable and usually worsened with sleep deprivation. But talking through it helped tremendously.



(I had to ask her to shut the blinds so that the construction workers on the roof immediately next door couldn't see me.)

Resources for Moms

La Leche League (national organization with many local divisions): www.lalecheleague.org or 1-800-LALECHE (525-3243)

Breastfeed Chicago (Chicago-based but with many online resources) :breastfeedchicago.org

Fussy Baby Network: (for help with infant crying, sleeping, & feeding) www.erikson.edu/fussy-baby-network/ or (888) 431-2229 or fussybaby@erikson.edu

Post-Partum Depression Alliance of Illinois (with information and resources on maternal mental health): www.ppdil.org

At the Museum of Contemporary Art, the high backed sofas made a perfect nest-like space to feed Cora while we took a break at the Kerry James Marshall exhibition.

Onward & Upward

This was one of the perfect days: Chicago at its finest, beautiful spring weather, logistics aligning perfectly (public transportation, flow of events), a fun outing, good food, and an easy baby. While we would still have challenges, we had found a relative rhythm at this point and it felt “doable.” Those red sofas held everything I loved the most.

In the End

We fully weaned the week before Cora's 1st birthday. We'd been slowly doing it over many months. We first gave her formula (one bottle a day) at 5 months, we introduced solids to her shortly after, then went up to 2 bottles of formula a day once my stash in the freezer ran out, and I couldn't keep up with her with pumping (sometime around 9 months). I stopped my mid-day pump right around the holidays when we left for our family trip. It was so nice not to have to cart my pump around at work anymore.

Breastfeeding and pumping were definitely a challenge, in different ways, at all the different stages. Again, I can't say that I fully loved it, but there were times that were great and relaxing and smooth. I wasn't sure how I'd feel fully giving it up...in some cases, the Oxytocin letdown can affect your emotions. But we both seemed pretty ready. By the end, we were down to only 1 or 2 very short sessions a day. She seemed to be self-weaning and not as interested in it, and I was happy to not have to worry about it anymore. But again, I'm so glad that I was able to do it for as long as I did. I was able to give her breastmilk for almost 12 months and that's pretty good.

I can't thank all of my supports enough: my job and co-workers (the Ounce of Prevention Fund, specifically the Illinois Policy Team, and Sara N), my friends (Lilly, Carie, Becca, Emily, Becky, Barbie, Mary, Lainie, Bridget L), our healthcare providers (pediatrician, doula, lactation consultant, OB/GYN, therapists), my family (Mom, Dad, Ashley, Diane and Joe, Greg and Terri). And most of all, my incredibly supportive husband

Adam and my fantastically smart, funny, adorable, and independent daughter, Cora.

In December 2016, I attended the annual Zero To Three conference and went to a presentation about a breastfeeding clinic, where they used the phrases: “Breast is best, but it doesn't mean it's easy” and “Just because it's natural, doesn't mean it feels normal.” I so wish I had heard some of this messaging when I was initially struggling.

This zine is not just about me and my journey breastfeeding, but a small reaching out. In the act of breastfeeding, your breasts are exposed, but not everything may be out in the open. I was recently attending a conference, and at lunch sat next to a woman who had her one-month-old daughter with her in the middle of a breastfeeding session. The staff put her plate in front of her, and she began to move her silverware over with one hand while cradling her infant in her other arm under a cover. I asked her if I could do anything for her. She hesitated at first, but then sighed and said “Actually, would you mind cutting my chicken up for me?” My own experience had made me more aware, and all I had to do was notice and ask. This is a simple anecdote with a relatively easy solution, but not all of them are.

I will again quote Anne-Marie Slaughter: “I have tried to ban the phrase ‘having it all’ in my own writing and speaking; let's focus instead on having enough for all and on creating the culture, policies, and institutions that will allow all of us to care for those we love.” Let's de-stigmatize, de-pressure, and talk frankly. And then let's provide the support and information to all women, men, and families so they can make the best decision for themselves.

End Notes

1 Eidelman, Arthur I. MD, & Richard J. Schanler, MD. American Academy of Pediatrics. (2012). [Breastfeeding and the use of human milk](http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/129/3/e827). *Pediatrics*; 129(3): e827-e841. <http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/129/3/e827>

2 ibid

3 Harder, T., Bergmann, R., Kallischnigg, G., Plagemann, A. (2005). [Duration of breastfeeding and risk of overweight: a meta-analysis](https://doi.org/10.1093/aje/kw100). *American Journal of Epidemiology*; 162(5): 397-403.

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5 Schwarz, E.B., Ray, R.M., Stuebe, A.M., Allison, M.A., Ness, R.B., Freiberg, M.S., et al. (2009). [Duration of lactation and risk factors for maternal cardiovascular disease](https://doi.org/10.1097/AOG.0b013e3181910000). *Obstetrics & Gynecology*; 113(5): 974-982.

6 Jones, Katherine M. et al. “Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Breastfeeding.” *Breastfeeding Medicine*, 2015 May 1; 10(4): 186–196. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4410446/>



