

Ask the DOULA

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Expert birthing advice from someone who knows

EMPLOYEE PRIVILEGE

My co-workers constantly tell me my desires and preferences for labor aren't going to happen—how can I handle that?

Your workplace may not be the right environment to share birth preferences or postnatal priorities. Birth is very personal. After all, it's part of our human sexuality and reproduction—and that demands privacy.

So, use this situation as your first step in defining clear boundaries and protecting your inner instincts. Your co-workers weren't privileged to hear how you made a baby—I hope!—so they needn't hear how you will meet that baby. Remember that while what resonates for you is important, your colleagues might not be coming from a neutral place. Some women won't be able to acknowledge your personal preferences and may take your choices as a rejection of theirs—or use your pregnancy to talk about what still hurts about their delivery experience.

Finding like-minded women outside of your professional network can be a valuable tool, so seeking a mother's support group—online or in person—might give you a more appropriate place to process your birth options and desires.

BREASTFEEDING BATTLES

My mother is against breastfeeding and my husband is very pro-breastfeeding. What can I do to deal with their different opinions?

You're not alone in experiencing this generational divide. Our mothers, and even their mothers before them, likely didn't breastfeed. Today, we know the health benefits of nursing, for both mom and baby, and are encouraged to do it for as long as possible. That's why I recommend my clients explain the decision to breastfeed not as a personal choice, but as one made as a result of new



information. Giving the grandparents hand-outs about the advantages of breastfeeding can be a powerful communication tool.

But beyond the health implications, for many the deeper issue is finding one's own path in parenting. Remember, breastfeeding will not be the first or last conflict. It's normal and natural to want approval of your parenting styles, but what matters more is learning to hush external voices and finding your own confidence as a mother.

When a client shares this common concern with me, I know it will be crucial to nourish and protect the breastfeeding relationship from the doubts and insecurities of the first three weeks postpartum. Nursing is a learned skill that requires listening to baby's cues and using your own body wisdom. So, having resources like a postpartum doula or lactation consultant, or attending free La Leche League meetings, are that much more important.

If research and instincts support your desire to breastfeed, your partner's backing will be invaluable. Research shows that encouragement from the father, together with his positive attitude and knowledge of nursing's benefits, has a strong influence on how long a mom nurses successfully. **D**

JUST ASK

Got a question for our expert doula? Email it to editors@pregnancymagazine.com, or write *Pregnancy Q&A*, 4000 Shoreline Court, Suite 400, South San Francisco, CA 94080