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## This Woman's Candid Instagram Is a Reminder That Breastfeeding Isn't Always Easy

Every woman—and every baby—is different.

If you've been to your ob/gyn's office in the past few years, you've probably spotted a poster or pamphlet encouraging new moms to try **breastfeeding** their babies. They feature slogans like "Breastfeeding is Bestfeeding!" and "Breastfeeding: Good for Baby, Good for Mom." But these marketing materials make breastfeeding look so easy—and one new mom reminds us that isn't always the case.

In a powerful new **Instagram** post, Angela Burzo tearfully looks at the camera while trying to nurse her newborn daughter, Aylee. "I love seeing all these beautiful women in their beautiful nursing clothes smiling down at their babes as they lovingly look up back at them hand in hand while breastfeeding away," she captioned the picture. "That is not my reality, right now that is. This is real & as much as I want to stay strong and be the soldier I feel I can be I cannot hide the struggle that is BREASTFEEDING."



"Whether she is not latching on properly, whether I am not producing enough milk to keep up with her demand, whether my nipples might not be adequate, whether we confused her with having to give her a bottle after pumping...whatever it may be it has been an emotional & painful struggle," Burzo continued. "Today has been full of no naps, sucking and not eating, crying and frustrated parents. This photo depicts my reality of this breastfeeding journey so far & that first latch & the pain I endure. Keeping it real."

Burzo's comments section has been flooded with people sharing their own stories of struggling with nursing and encouraging her to keep trying. "My first child, a girl, I cried for two weeks. It's like my nipples died and then were reborn," one person wrote. "It was the worst pain. I would have rather [gone] through childbirth again. It gets better." "My little one is 4 weeks old and I go through the same exact struggle," another said. "Thank you for posting this! It's given me an extra bit of strength to know I'm not alone."

## **Breastfeeding is often depicted as a seamless experience, but it's not easy for everyone.**

"I'm so glad that she put this out there," Leigh Anne O'Connor, board-certified lactation consultant and La Leche League leader, tells SELF. "There is this idea that breastfeeding is easy, but it's a learned experience." Sure, breastfeeding is natural, but that doesn't mean it's simple for everyone. Plus, women are strongly encouraged to do it behind closed doors or under a nursing wrap—and that's a problem. "People don't grow up watching it and don't know how to do it as a result," O'Connor says.

Women are also fed the idea that there's a one-size-fits-all approach to breastfeeding, but that's not the case. "There is all this gear and these pillows that are supposed to help, but they don't help everybody," O'Connor says. "Everybody is different and has different needs."

Diana West, a board-certified lactation consultant with La Leche League International, tells SELF that breastfeeding issues are common. "We moms hear about heartbreaking situations like hers so often that it seems like breastfeeding fails more often than it works," she says. West explains that Burzo's post "really gets to the heart of all of the breastfeeding problems that we see." West stresses that many of the things that cause breastfeeding problems are out of a new mom's control, but unfortunately moms usually blame themselves.

Since the push for breastfeeding is fairly new, many women may not have close relatives who nursed their babies, international board-certified lactation consultant Joan Younger Meek, M.D., R.D., chairwoman of the American Academy of Pediatrics section on breastfeeding and associate dean for graduate medical education at FloridaState University College of Medicine, tells SELF. "Breastfeeding classes, books, and web resources can only go so far in preparation," she says. Plus, she adds, new moms don't have a way of measuring how much milk their baby is getting—they can only assume it is or isn't enough—and that can seriously stress them out.

## **Breastfeeding may come with issues, but many of them are fixable.**

Just like adults, babies have their own needs; what works for one with breastfeeding might not work for another. Burzo specifically said her baby was having trouble latching, and O'Connor says that's an issue that she sees a lot. That may be due to many different reasons, including the mother having to push for a long time during delivery (which can create muscle tension in a baby's mouth and jaw) and a tongue tie, a condition in which the range of motion in a baby's tongue is restricted.

The solution to a latching issue is different depending on the cause, O'Connor says, but often changing positions, getting the baby closer to the mom during nursing, or making a "sandwich" of the breast so that the baby can get a bigger mouthful helps. She also says that babies can have a bad latch if they're just on the nipple, which can really hurt. (A baby should have a mouthful of breast—not just the nipple.)

As for not producing enough milk, O'Connor says, "That's everybody's fear." But it's not always a reality. Milk works on a supply and demand schedule, she explains, and increasing the demand should increase the supply. So, if moms are concerned that they're not feeding their baby enough, O'Connor recommends they pump after feedings to get their milk supply up.

And when it comes to a baby being confused by having a bottle, O'Connor says that it's often due to the baby's preference. Some bottles have a fast flow, which gives the baby a lot of milk at once without having to suck hard, she explains. "They suck it down in five minutes and the mother feels inadequate because they can't do that on the breast," she says. That's why she recommends that parents who need to supplement opt for bottle with a slow flow nipple, which should take the baby about 15 to 20 minutes to finish.

## There's no shame in using formula if things aren't working out.

Sure, research has shown that there are [many benefits to breastfeeding](#), but formula is also considered a healthy alternative. If you're trying to nurse and struggling, are stressed out by the process, or just know it's not for you, that's OK. "If you don't have milk or donor milk, and the baby is hungry, use formula," O'Connor says. "That's what it's used for." As Jeanne Twigg-Taylor, a lactation consultant at Massachusetts General Hospital, tells SELF, there's no black and white answer for when you should try formula. "It's a very personal decision," she says.

If you're worried that you're not producing enough, Dr. Meek recommends checking in with your child's pediatrician first who can weigh your baby and watch you nurse. "Some moms worry that the baby isn't getting enough milk when things are really OK," she says. And, if you ultimately decide that formula is best for you and your family, your child's pediatrician can help you pick the best one for your baby.

Remember, though, that if breastfeeding is important to you and you're struggling with it, you can reach out to a board-certified lactation consultation for help. Try to focus on one feeding at a time. "Just get through today," O'Connor says. "There is help."

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- [How The Pressure to Breastfeed Can Exacerbate Postpartum Depression](#)
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