



TEN STEP TUESDAY

# Guilt, shame and who is really to blame when breastfeeding doesn't work out

## It's Ten Step Tuesday!

**This week's Ten Step is an excerpt from the article "Becky Mannel: 'Breastfeeding is now a serious public health issue.'"**

This is an excerpt from the Sustainable Journalism Foundation (NonDoc) out of another Midwestern community - Oklahoma City. They published a Q&A with Becky Mannel, an IBCLC of 30 years, and discussed some of the awesome work she has done in Oklahoma. She specifically highlights some public health issues that are such a barrier to breastfeeding mothers across the US.

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**Q.** "You've spoken frequently about the benefits of breast milk over formula and have been critical of the formula industry. There are some mothers who struggle to breastfeed, for one reason or another, and that can be associated with a lot of shame and guilt. What would you say to a person in that situation?"

**A.** I say several things, and I say these in trainings all over Oklahoma:

- We, the public health and health care communities, strongly encourage breastfeeding for the best health outcomes for parents and babies, and then we make it incredibly difficult for many to succeed at it. We can and we must do better to help mothers reach their own breastfeeding goals. Most mothers quit breastfeeding before they intended to, no matter how hard they tried. There is no shame or guilt in doing the best you can. There is and should be anger that we failed to provide timely support, whether in the hospital or after going home with a new baby. Mothers blame themselves when breastfeeding does not work out as they thought it would when we, as a society, are really the ones to blame.
- Formula itself is not an evil substance. We need good, safe, quality formulas. And we need to support breastfeeding so we can reduce the need for formula as much as possible. The formula industry, however, profits when breastfeeding does not work out, and that is a global problem. No company profits financially when breastfeeding succeeds.
- If a mother thinks her baby is not feeding well and she cannot get timely, skilled lactation support, then she needs to make sure her baby gets fed in the safest way possible, whether it's her own expressed milk, donor milk or formula. Mothers will do what they think is best for their baby and themselves, and I absolutely support that.
- We need paid maternity leave so all parents have time to recover from childbirth, bond with their new baby and establish breastfeeding. European countries that have federal policies for paid maternity leave have huge decreases in their infant mortality rates.

Read the full article here: <https://nondoc.com/2021/03/30/becky-mannel-breastfeeding-is-now-a-serious-public-health-issue/>.

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