



Circles of Support



Susan M. Rotella, LLL Leader, Rhode Island, USA; Co-Author, IL Pane Della Vita: *An Italian Cookbook to Nourish the Soul*

At the heart of La Leche League International (LLLI) is the breastfed baby, whose mother is the source of comfort, nourishment and love. LLLI supports, educates, and accredits La Leche League (LLL) Leaders*** to gain information and skills to help all mothers who request help. Preserving and protecting the mother/baby bond is essential when helping women to breastfeed while employed.

Since its founding in 1956, LLLI has maintained that women should receive correct information and support to breastfeed, no matter the situation. LLLI has listened to and supported women who work, by choice or necessity, through published literature, articles in LLLI magazines, and sessions at conferences and workshops. Around the world, LLL Leaders provide concrete and emotional support for women in the workplace, applauding them

for breastfeeding when it means expressing milk during lunch hour; enduring teasing and criticism from co-workers; and making the extra effort to do whatever it takes so baby can have the best nutrition.

All mothers need to know breastfeeding basics and have their questions answered about sore nipples, nighttime feedings and starting solids. Many mothers need to learn how to deal with unsupportive relatives. Mothers who are employed, at home or outside the home, will have these questions and others, such as how to express and store milk; leaving the baby with a caregiver; and balancing working and breastfeeding. Just as all mothers, employed mothers need someone who will listen to them, encourage them, and help them to see that it is possible to work and breastfeed.

LLL Leaders provide expert help and information in a group setting, which affords mothers an opportunity to meet other mothers with similar needs. Some LLL groups

Workplace and Employment

hold meetings at night or on Saturdays so working mothers can attend. In countries all over the world, LLL Leaders help employed mothers figure out creative ways to keep the breastfeeding relationship intact, such as switching work hours, bringing baby to work, going home for lunch and working at home.

Vicky Reynell, LLL Area Coordinator of Leaders for South Africa reports “LLL Leaders encourage mothers to tell their employers about the benefits of breastfeeding and explore the existence of a crèche (daycare) near the mother’s place of employment. LLL Leaders encourage a working mother to co-sleep with her baby to get more rest during night feeds and they remind mothers of all the advantages breastfeeding offers, including the time-saving aspect of having no bottles to prepare. They emphasize the renewed bonding which occurs every time a woman gets home and sits down to breastfeed her baby.”

In South Africa, LLL Leaders face the same challenges faced by mothers anywhere, even considering they have four months maternity leave. One LLL Leader in South Africa relays “Here in Grahamstown, ... some mothers are able to work flexi-hours or nip home to feed their babies or work mornings only and express enough milk to satisfy their babies, ... but even given these creative solutions and generous, understanding, employers, the stress and anxiety created by the opposing pulls of ‘baby’ and ‘employer’ are huge.” This LLL Leader presents a forum for specific needs of employed mothers. She is “... putting together a bi-monthly “Working Mums” breastfeeding support group to help mothers cope with issues such as training care-givers to respect and carry-out the mother’s requests

with regards to breast milk; introduction of solid food; sleep and breastfeeding.” She says “I am excited about the challenges of joining the economic needs of mothers who are employed and the instinctive maternal needs of a mother.”

In addition to the activities of LLL Leaders in over 68 countries, LLLI provides written information to educate and inform breastfeeding women. The LLLI website, www.llli.org has literature and references for every breastfeeding topic, including breastfeeding and working. *Hirkani’s Daughters: Women Who Scale Modern Mountains to Combine Breastfeeding and Working*, *Working and Breastfeeding*, and *Mother’s Guide to Pumping Milk* are three useful resources available through LLLI. Mothers can connect with each other through the online LLLI Mother to Mother Forums, one of which is geared to breastfeeding, employed women.

Globally, women face many challenges, including those relating to breastfeeding and working. Through La Leche League International and its network of LLL Leaders, employed breastfeeding mothers receive the resources, support, encouragement and mother-to-mother help they need to have a rewarding and positive breastfeeding experience.

****A La Leche League Leader is a mother who has breastfed her own baby for about a year or longer and who has done additional reading and training to be accredited by La Leche League. She draws not only on her own experience but on the wealth of information and evidence in her LLL resources.*



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The LLLI Mission

To help mothers worldwide to breastfeed through mother-to-mother support, encouragement, information and education, and to promote a better understanding of breastfeeding as an important element in the healthy development of the baby and mother.

La Leche League International is a globally recognized, not-for-profit organization that maintains a presence in more than 68 countries. Since 1956, over 43,000 women have become accredited Leaders who assist other women who want to breastfeed their babies. For breastfeeding information, to find a LLL Leader or LLL Group in your area, or to order materials, visit <http://www.llli.org> or call 800-LALECHE.