

## 12<sup>th</sup> ELACTA Conference Breastfeeding and Lactation:

### Where Science Meets Practice

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#### Conference Workshop Report-

#### Preparing Future Parents for Breastfeeding

The 12<sup>th</sup> ELACTA conference Breastfeeding and Lactation: Where science meets practice was held in Bremen Germany on 13-14<sup>th</sup> May 2022. A pre- conference workshop was facilitated on 12<sup>th</sup> May and this provided the opportunity for conference attendees to attend workshops on topics that included Communication skills, Nipple problems, Breastfeeding with cleft lip and palate, Tongue tie and parental education and preparing future parents for breastfeeding. I chose to attend the latter session, which was facilitated by Dr Mary Nolan, Professor of Perinatal Education at the University of Worcester in the UK. As an educator myself I always find it interesting to attend lectures and watch how colleagues facilitate learning.

Preparing Parents for Breastfeeding was indeed an interactive and engaging workshop where we spent equal time moving about the classroom as we did sitting down. This provided a great opportunity to meet other conference attendees from many countries that attended the conference.

Dr Mary Nolan introduced us to the importance of learning styles, understanding how people learn and understanding how you as an individual, learn. She described two types of learners, Analytic Thinkers and Holistic Thinkers.

**Analytic thinkers** like logic, processing information rationally, learning from the part to the whole. Analytic thinkers are highly organised, want a daily routine, plan activities in advance, are morning people and also like a "To DO " list.

On the other hand, **Holistic thinkers** like to process information holistically. They like perspective and dimension, depth and distance. They enjoy forms and patterns, pictures, graphs and charts. They like visualisation and pictorial representation. Holistic thinkers do not like "To Do "lists, they find routine limiting and are late afternoon and evening people.

Think about what kind of learner you are leaning towards?

**ANALYTICS are**

Highly organised

Want a daily routine

Plan activities in advance

Morning People

Love "To Do" lists

**HOLISTICS are**

Disorganised

Find routine limiting

Find it difficult to be on time

Late afternoon/evening people

Hate "To Do" lists

As a facilitator of learning it is important to have a basic understanding of how adults learn. The adult learner brings experiences and self-awareness to learning that younger student learners do not. The adult learner is self-directed and autonomous. They use prior knowledge and life experiences. They are goal oriented, engage collaboratively and are practical. Why do women and their partners attend a breastfeeding class? The adult learner wishes to be self-directed and autonomous. They wish to make informed decisions, to feel more in control and to feel more adult.

It is also important as IBCLC educators that we are aware of the way that people learn. Dr Mary Nolan described the three primary learning styles- visual, auditory and kinaesthetic. Visual learners tend to learn by looking, seeing, viewing and watching; auditory learners tend to learn by listening, hearing and speaking, while kinesthetic learners learn by experiencing, moving and doing. It is important to include all these approaches in a teaching session as we have the ability to learn by these three styles

In preparation for teaching sessions Dr Mary Nolan also emphasised that it is important to think about how much information you wish to share in the class. A good approach is to think about a recent experience of receiving information yourself. This could be Covid 19, for example. Think about where you got your information from about the pandemic. Think about which source you valued highly. Did you have enough information or too much? Too much information can lead to confusion and anxiety.

It is also important to consider the participants that may be vulnerable to information overload?

1. People with a lower educational level, possibly lower socio-economic status
2. People with less knowledge on the subject
3. People with poorer cognitive abilities

Dr Mary Nolan then discussed how we as IBCLCs can avoid overloading parents attending classes with information. The key points addressed were as follows:

1. Consider how long you have available for a class, don't deliver a vast amount of information in a short period of time.
2. Present information in a variety and interesting way. Use pictures, graphics.
3. Suggest reliable evidence-based resources
4. Identify key points you would make and repeat these points.

The next part of the workshop explored fathers' experiences attending an antenatal breastfeeding class. The IBCLC educator will need to consider "What do Dads/fathers want to talk about antenatally"?

Key points discussed in this section are as follows:

1. How breastfeeding will change their relationship with their partner
2. Their role in the first weeks after the baby's birth
3. Coping with sleepless nights
4. Mental health- theirs and their partner.

And finally, Dr Nolan introduced the topic of self-efficacy and breastfeeding, sharing two narratives with us that are important for IBCLC educators to be conscious of in our teaching and learning role.

Firstly, what is efficacy? It was described as the extent which you believe that you have the resources (internal and external) to put certain behaviours into action; which is our goal as IBCLC educators.

And finally, the women's personal narratives shared at the conference...

"The women remembered specific positive affirmations that the teachers had used in class that helped them in feeding their baby"

"They appreciate how teachers had encouraged them to believe in their ability to have control over their breastfeeding experience".

I will conclude the report by thanking ALCI for the bursary toward attending the ELACTA conference and I hope that you all find the workshop report useful and supportive as you prepare your own breastfeeding classes.



The Self- efficacy Staircase.