



ILCA Print and Multimedia Reviews **February 2010 – Available at www.ILCA.org**

Interaction and Relationships in Breastfeeding Families: Implications for Practice

Dr. Keren Epstein-Gilboa, IBCLC

Hale Publishing, 2009

311 pages, references, index, US\$29.71, softcover

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This book will be a welcome addition to the health practitioner's desk. Because this book is based upon the author's dissertation, it reads like one (both fully detailed and fully annotated). What the book accomplishes is to provide an important, comprehensive literature review of basic breastfeeding along with equally important original qualitative research on the relationships among members of families with nurslings, siblings, parents, and grandparents. Because this book is so thoroughly researched and replete with examples, the reader will be fully up to speed after reading and internalizing the important concepts presented. Lactation professionals will find the book well documented and the case studies on-target as to what is seen in the field, particularly in extended breastfeeding families.

For one familiar with breastfeeding literature, skimming through the first half of the book will provide a comprehensive picture of all that breastfeeding entails. Epstein-Gilboa very elegantly relates the "Confusing Views of Breasts," especially detailing their sexualization and feminist views on nursing. Her assessment of the view of nursing as superior versus normal is enlightening. As well, she offers a comprehensive perspective on guilt.

The book takes a tone equally academic yet easier to read when the author describes the nursing dyads and families while reporting her qualitative data. The quotes so aptly describe nursing that anyone unfamiliar with nursing, particularly extended breastfeeding, will learn the full gamut of interactions. Important are the detailed sections on fathers, tandem nursers, extended breastfeeders, and siblings of nurslings.

Overall, I recommend this book to any healthcare practitioner looking for an academic resource that contains lots of examples. A non-lactation specialist who is unfamiliar with the nuances of the extended breastfeeding family, such as a pediatrician or registered nurse, would benefit greatly from such a comprehensive resource. Not only is every chapter concluded with a summary and a few paragraphs on "Clinical Implications," they are also well referenced and replete with well quoted case studies. Well-educated parents will also enjoy this highly academic work.

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