
The “Brave New World” of Men Who Breastfeed

Some men say nature can be manipulated to allow them to nurse their children.

by Roy Waller

An article in the May/June issue of the gay and lesbian magazine *And Baby* has added to growing interest in an unusual question: Are males capable of lactation and breastfeeding? If so, should gay men nurse the infants they adopt?

David Glassman, psychologist and director of a Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgendered program in Philadelphia, supported the concept.

“As a gay male parent, why wouldn’t I want my child to have the same advantages in physical and emotional development as other children?” Glassman asked.

He went on to say that the difficult experience of obtaining a child to adopt “could motivate gay men to consider entering a brave new world of male breastfeeding.”

Feminist author Fiona Giles, author of *Fresh Milk: The Secret Life of Breasts*, claims that there are “obvious benefits” to male breastfeeding. While men have the biological ability to produce milk, she says, the time and effort necessary to induce lactation might be out of proportion to the miniscule amounts of milk actually produced—but for a gay man to hold a baby to his breast “would be extremely beneficial to both the parent and child.”

Lactation consultant Susan Leisner of Buffalo, New York, August 2003

on the other hand, points out that there are many more effective ways of establishing a deep close bond between a male parent of any sexual orientation and the child—such as singing, rocking, skin-to-skin contact, and talking to the baby with the parent’s face in close proximity to the baby’s. “If a man came to me to help him lactate, I would refuse,” Leisner declared.

Laura Shanley, author of the book *Unassisted Childbirth*, says in the article that she is aware of a few gay men who have breastfed their babies. But, Shanley says, it is difficult for the elective fathers to come forward and speak of their experience out of fear of losing their children.

All of the sources cited in the *And Baby* article, however, point out the biological hurdle of inducing male lactation, as well as the social stigma attached to the idea of men breastfeeding their children.

Commenting on the article, NARTH’s Joseph Nicolini said, “A gay man imitating a woman by nursing a baby is an affront to human dignity. We were not created to masquerade as the opposite sex—it takes a woman to truly ‘mother’ a baby.”

Source: “Breastfeeding: for Dad . . . By Jennifer Newton Reents, *And Baby*, May-June 2003, pp. 59-62. ■