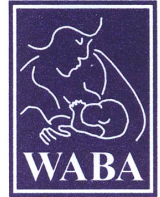


WABA Statement on Father's Day: 2013

Celebrating the role of fathers in the lives of children and their mothers in fostering a healthy and loving family!



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Breastfeeding Action**

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Father's Day is usually celebrated all over the world on the 3rd Sunday of June to pay tribute to fathers' substantial role in the lives of their children. Ideally speaking their contribution begins even before their babies are born! Starting from taking care of the mothers throughout the maternity period to the delivery time and onwards. Once the babies are born a new invisible bond is established between father and the child which remains intact as long as fathers are alive and even when they pass away. Usually, children feel safer and securer if both mothers and fathers are around and involved. Fatherhood is composed of millions of tiny decisions based on care and love of fathers for their Children. Anne Geddes said it very well "*Any man can be a father but it takes someone special to be a dad*".

From the dyad of mother and child we expand to the triad of the family where the father has a pivotal role during the reproductive continuum, including pregnancy, delivery and post-partum.

One cannot ignore the importance of the positive and friendly influence a male can exercise on the decision making of a mother regarding her choice of extending her family, during pregnancy and finally making the choice of breastfeeding. Hence, we must appreciate all those fathers, who care and support mothers in their critical moments of marital and maternal life!

As we see that a traditional family is incomplete without a father figure in the triad of mother, child and father where a father can help

to support both mother and child for successful breastfeeding to happen. WABA launched a *Golden Bow* initiative many years ago to represent this triad in the form of a Golden Bow, representing mother, child and father/society for successful breastfeeding¹.

Right from the beginning, a sensitised father can play a positive role in respecting the birthing rights of a woman by giving equal importance to her opinion whether she desires to extend the family and have a baby or not. Such a father would not ignore a mother's right to choose and would refrain from imposing his own decisions upon her. If the father is on her side, she can counter the undue pressures from the extended family and society. For example, such kind of persuasions are common in the Asian cultural perspective, where in most situations the mother-in-law or the patriarch of the family decides whether a newly-wed mother should have a baby or not, rather than the mother herself!²

Similarly at the onset of breastfeeding, if a mother knows that her partner is supporting her, she can easily decide to opt for breastfeeding, she can face internal and external challenges and she can overcome apprehensions about commencing breastfeeding. Being a sensible father he can guide and encourage her to get peer counseling or lactation consultation to help enable the mother to successfully initiate and continue breastfeeding.

Being a sensitive and sensible father he can dispel myths about breastfeeding and acquire adequate knowledge to help mother understand the importance and the health benefits of breastfeeding.

¹ <http://www.waba.org.my/resources/goldenbow.htm>

² Kamla Bhasin "Understanding Gender" 2004, p20-21

There are many ways a father can help a breastfeeding mother during this trying time. Usually fathers feel excluded from this process as breastfeeding biologically connects mother and her child physically. Fathers just resort to being aloof and some even feel jealous as their intimate time with their partner is taken away by the baby. Such kind of feelings and attitudes can be easily tackled with the right kind of information and fathers can become inclusive of the breastfeeding process.

Here are some of the ways fathers can help breastfeeding mothers³ and get involved;

- Be active, be vocal and know the facts. Read breastfeeding books for her, attend classes with her.
- Learn how to give the right support: while she is sitting down and breastfeeding; bring her food, water, TV remote You can take care of other children while the mother is breastfeeding.
- Let her know how much you appreciate her. Since breastfeeding is a physically exhausting experience, your words of encouragement will mean a lot for her.
- Get up with the baby at night even if you are not feeding him/her: You can still change the diaper, rock the baby and help mom in many ways.
- Take over other baby responsibilities from the mother; babies need to be carried, bathed, talked to, loved, and all of that can be done by you. It's also the best way to bond with the baby.
- Take over household responsibilities as well, like cleaning the house, getting dinner ready, paying the bills, doing dishes etc.
- Don't allow her to fall prey to wrong influence ;

If you get any free formula in the mail or from a well-meaning friend, donate it to a food shelter. Even having it in the house is akin to having a cake on the counter when someone is on a diet.

- Keep out the negative "help":

If your mother or any other relative starts talking to you or to your wife about breastfeeding in a negative way, such as she needs to add supplements, tell her that such kind of discussion is not welcome or appreciated.

- Know when your wife needs help:

If your wife is suffering from bleeding nipples or is convinced she is not making enough milk, call a certified breastfeeding counselor or a local La Leche League Leader or make a house call and help out.

- Help her with enough uninterrupted sleep and let her have enough rest to heal her body to recover from birthing experience
- Pull her up if she is experiencing post-partum depression⁴ by cheering her up and appreciating her efforts in breastfeeding.

On this Father's day, World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action (WABA) salutes all those fathers who care for their breastfeeding partners by protecting , promoting and supporting breastfeeding for the sake of the health of their babies and mothers to foster a healthy society.

For more information on Men's Initiative please click
<http://www.waba.org.my/whatwedo/mensinitiative/index.htm>

This statement was prepared by Naweed A. Harooni (WABA) and reviewed by WABA and WABA Men's Working Group.

⁴ La Leche League: New Studies in Post-Partum Depression: Kathleen Kendel, Leaven: Vol. 41 No. 4, August-September 2005, pp. 75-79. <https://www.llli.org/llleaderweb/lv/lvaugsep05p75.html>