

How My Breasts Saved the World

Lisa Wood Shapiro

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“It’s gross, sticky, smelly. It caused me to bleed and experience terrifying pain,” the author tells visitors the weekend after giving birth to her daughter. She’s talking not about childbirth, but breastfeeding. Shapiro shares important truths about the challenges and rewards of a breastfeeding mother in this memoir of the year spent nursing her first child.

This first book by an Emmy-award winning filmmaker and self-proclaimed “benevolent know-it-all” promises the reader important advice on becoming a first-time mom. Shapiro keeps that promise with the wit of a comedian and the honesty of a very-best girlfriend. Chapters cover childbirth, the hospital stay, learning to breastfeed, parenting groups, babysitters, and returning to work. “The story” concludes, about a year after it begins, with the successful weaning of Shapiro’s daughter.

Most parenting books, particularly those dealing with breastfeeding, adopt a serious, even medical, tone. Shapiro’s refreshingly comic voice pierces through the foggiest post-partum blues to commiserate, share advice, and point out the humor in those anxious days after a baby is born. The greatest laughs come from reading about some of her most private moments, like accidentally biting her two-day-old daughter, or glimpsing herself in the mirror looking like “a character in a John Waters film,” complete with “grandma panties and cabbage leaves sticking out of [her] bra.”

In addition to being an undeniably entertaining read, this book gives readers valuable advice and information about the first year of parenthood. Important and possibly unfamiliar terms like lactation consultant, engorgement panic, and frantic eater, are clearly defined for the reader. As the title might suggest, Shapiro pays particular attention to the topic of breastfeeding. One chapter includes a detailed description of the process of positioning a baby for nursing and an optimal latch, information most women never learn without coaching from a lactation consultant. Other important tips include listening for the sounds of swallowing as an indication that feeding is happening, and a warm salt water treatment for the relief of sore nipples.

Pregnant women contemplating breastfeeding will find the information in this book invaluable and Shapiro’s account of her experiences motivating and inspiring. First-time moms and any woman who has tried breastfeeding will enjoy commiserating with Shapiro’s ups and downs and undoubtedly pick up a useful tip or two along the way. This entertaining and informative guide deserves a place right alongside the “Girlfriend’s Guide” and “What to Expect” series on parenting shelves.

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