The Impact of Knowledge

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 Several years back I completed an assignment in Midwifery 144b that was directly on the Midwifery Model of Care. I wrote what this all-important model is all about and it emphasized the importance of educating clients and yourself. As it stated: A midwife is there to educate parents through all stages of health care from planning to postpartum care. She is able to assist her clients prior to pregnancy in supporting and educating them in conception as well as being there for regular prenatal visits, while in labor, and for up to three months after delivery for postpartum appointments. Midwives can also educate on a wide variety of other issues such as lactation, postpartum depression, and infant care.

 As a Doula and Child Birth Educator and midwifery student, I often teach childbirth education in the form of classes, handouts and through conversations with my clients. In another course, I took; MDWF 341 Breastfeeding, I designed a handout titled “Advantages of breastfeeding” which I recently gave to this client, this was the first client I have had in all my years as a doula, that I experienced this particular situation and I learned several things during this experience.

This was my clients first pregnancy and she came to me with many questions, after exploring and asking many of my own, I realized that she was being swayed against breastfeeding by many of her family members and friends. she expressed how discouraging her family had been and that she was not sure how she should feel. We talked about this subject for most of her visit that month, I encouraged her that she had to make this choice for herself and that I would support her in whatever decision she made and this sent her home with much to think about.

The following month she again brought up the subject, so we further explored her concerns and her own wants and desires. We discussed what informed decision making was and how she and her husband needed to make decisions that were good for them and their family, and we talked all about how to breastfeed. This time I was more prepared, as I had printed out this handout for her, “the Advantages of Breastfeeding”, I gave it to her to take home and read.

A few days later she called me and we spoke again, this time for over an hour, I answered several more questions she had, and we touched more about the benefits to both her and her newborn, and how these things can actually benefit this child throughout its life. We also spoke about the challenges that some moms face and if she faced ant of these things, what she could do to remedy such challenges, such as; plugged ducts, mastitis, public feeding, breast pumping, storing milk and also what she would need to purchase if she decided to breastfeed; like nursing bras, pads and a breast pump. On the following and last visit before her birth, she thanked me again and stated; how she had actually shared this information with several family members and how she would be breastfeeding because of the knowledge gained, and because of sharing this knowledge with her family, they are now supporting her in this effort.

After her birth; I walked her through the process of breastfeeding for the first time and although she and baby struggled a bit in the beginning, they both picked it up in no time flat. By the time, I returned the next day, they both had a firm grasp on the whole concept and the smile on mom's face as she breastfed her newborn in front of me said it all, it was quite obvious that she was very proud of herself. Ironically her sister had birthed her 3rd child that same afternoon through a planned C-section, 130 miles away in another hospital and also had decided to try breastfeeding for the first time. I was very excited to learn, that in learning myself about breastfeeding and passing on this simple handout, time spent encouraging, supporting and giving evidenced-based material could really help impact a client in a positive way, and how it helped them to make important informed decisions for themselves and in also sharing this information, it also had an impact on her extended family.

In conclusion: It has now been a couple of months, since she birthed her baby girl; she called me a few days ago, first to again thank me for sharing this information and then to share her exciting news with me. She stated; that she is still feeding her baby girl, but that her sister lost her milk right after returning to work at 6 weeks and that she is babysitting her niece for her. To save her sister money on expensive formula, she is feeding both babies during the day but has also worked up her milk supply to send her sister home enough milk to feed her niece during the night. Wow! I was thrilled and impressed, to say the least. Not many experienced breastfeeding moms can do this, let alone a first-time mom. It just goes to show, that education and determination pay off, and that breastfeeding really is all about supply and demand.