

The Breastfeeding Continuum: A Tool for Breastfeeding Mothers

The Breastfeeding Continuum was developed by Johanna Rzepa and Chris Blackman as a demonstration project for the Douglas College Breastfeeding Counsellor Certificate Program. The purpose of the tool is to extend breastfeeding duration in communities. It provides breastfeeding mothers with anticipatory guidance in order to initiate and maintain breastfeeding along the continuum from birth to two years or beyond.

The Breastfeeding Continuum is three dimensional and linear as it depicts a timeline from birth to two years. It is equally divided by notches into days, weeks and months. A brief guidance caption above each notch highlights a stage of milk production, an infant's development, or possible barrier to breastfeeding. The time periods reflect different stages of the breastfeeding continuum, and are divided into seven colours which reflect the seven energy centers in the human body. The focus of each energy center is combined with a corresponding colour to generate seven inspirational statements. The statements serve to motivate the breastfeeding mother, and normalize the breastfeeding experience. Each inspirational statement evokes the feeling of its corresponding colour.

Colour	Focus	Inspirational Statement
<i>RED: Days 1-6</i>	Grounding	<i>To Initiate/Respond To Life's New Challenges</i>
<i>ORANGE: Weeks 1-6</i>	To Feel/Emotions	<i>More Confidence</i>
<i>YELLOW: Weeks 7-12</i>	To Think	<i>Mental Clarity</i>
<i>GREEN: Weeks 13-18</i>	Love/Radiance	<i>Learning To Integrate New Situations</i>
<i>BLUE: Weeks 19-24</i>	Higher Emotions	<i>Communicating And Responding To Needs</i>
<i>PURPLE: Months 7-12</i>	Wisdom	<i>Intuitively Applying Knowledge And Experience</i>
<i>PINK: Months 14-24</i>	Higher Will	<i>A Sense of Knowing And Understanding</i>

(Adapted from Kreiger & Kunz)

The Breastfeeding Continuum gives clients a sense of progression, as the colours and corresponding statements help them move through the continuum stages. It motivates and is inspirational. The tool integrates many ideas into a simple tool that normalizes the breastfeeding experience. It presents the idea that long-term breastfeeding can enhance a woman's sense of self and confidence in the choices she makes for her family. Because long-term breastfeeding is a new concept for many people, and often difficult to do in our cultural context, the tool offers as a reward a higher level of knowledge from the breastfeeding experience. "Commitment to the Continuum" was used Vs

“Commitment to Breastfeeding” because we wanted mothers to feel a higher purpose by creating a cultural change Vs feeling part of a competition that could imply judgement.

If you have any questions or would like to find out more about the Breastfeeding Continuum Tool, please contact Chris Blackman at chris_blackman@dccnet.com.