

WHAT GENTLE WEANING LOOKS LIKE

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Many of us start off knowing we want to breastfeed. First we set ourselves the 6-month exclusive target, then one year, and then some of us go on and on.

I found myself in a place where at 1 year neither N nor I were nearly finished. I knew he wasn't ready to wean and I decided around the 14-month mark to continue with feeding on demand. For a couple of months before that I had tried the approach of distracting him and had managed to cut off the afternoon feed. But around 14 -15 months he had got a spell of [heat related vomiting](#) and I started feeding on demand again and didn't look back.

Until I got pregnant that is.

He was 21 months when [I got pregnant](#). Though I was severely sick the first time too, this time I just couldn't cope with the HG – severe vomiting, weight loss, and dehydration. The drain on my body was too much but nursing had its advantages too as I felt guilty for neglecting N and wallowing in self-pity. At least with nursing I was spending quality time with him and resting.

However in those first three months of pregnancy I felt myself go up and down on the decision to let him decide when to wean and at times felt angry with him for nursing and I suppose it showed. He started sensing my resentment and the perceptive person in him began to slowly start weaning himself albeit reluctantly. I would be lying if I said I wasn't prodding the process along.

When I was through with my first trimester N turned 2. Suddenly my beautiful boy transformed into the terrible twos monster. Temper tantrums, clinginess, manipulation, and utter disregard for the rules and for my instruction, the works. I couldn't help thinking that the reduction in nursing (and impending weaning) was causing a lot of this stress too. He knew that mamma has changed. Mamma has a new baby on the way and he will have to share me. His beloved nursing was being cut short thanks to these changes. He didn't like it at all and he knew how to convey it.

I had, over the course of 3 – 4 months managed to cut down on nursing about 4 to 5 times in 24 hours, to just once in the morning. Though he co-operated I could see it was causing a lot of insecurity in my boy. I kept talking to him about how we had to stop nursing soon as it was hurting mamma.

Then one day on the 8th of November at 25 months and 4 days he didn't ask to nurse in the morning and went on with his day. I remember the morning of the 7th that I thought was the last nursing session we had. N came into my bed and lingered for a long time touching my face and looking into my eyes while nursing. It was as if he knew it was the last time and I didn't. It was almost 40 minutes the longest session in recent times by far. We both drifted off to sleep. When I woke I gently detached him and he cried.

A couple of days after that, though he didn't ask to nurse, his behavior changed. He was very upset with small things cried a lot and kept a distance from me. His body language was different. While a

lot of moms may feel this was the right time to wean and it was the natural thing to do I couldn't go through with it. Many moms pride themselves on setting a date for weaning and sticking with it. However 3 days later I offered to nurse again because I could sense he was coping with this huge change alone and couldn't figure out if he had made the right decision. To be honest I was near tears all the time those days. It wasn't only him; I too felt it wasn't the right time to wean. Because of the pregnancy I had pushed away my older child though he wasn't ready. Who makes the rules that 2 years is enough or 1 year for that matter?

When I offered to nurse he pushed me away and I realized he was scared of rejection. He was scared I would say no and deny him like the many times I had in the recent past. Finally he nursed.

This was early November.

Now two months later though my milk has dried up completely he nurses every 3 – 4 days. Out of the blue he asks to nurse and if I am free and in the mood I oblige. It's a fabulous set up if you ask me. It doesn't take a lot out of me, my toddler has the security of knowing that it's available to him when he wants it, when my milk comes in after the baby is born he may tandem nurse for some time, he won't feel resentful of his younger sibling because nursing is still available to him even though the baby is around. I have a feeling that he is smart enough to realize that my milk will come in again when the baby comes and he is hanging around for the ride!

I should also add that my husband has been right by me with every parenting decision I make. Partners are absolutely instrumental in making breastfeeding successful! Thank you Sumit!

I cried a lot when I thought N had weaned for good back in early November. I lay on the bed one afternoon and had a hearty sob. I know all good things end. All babies grow up. But I treasure those endless nights and days where all I did was stroke those baby cheeks, smell that innocent forehead and pour the most pure form of love into that little body with every cell of my being.

I know the end will come soon. But not just yet.

Mammas the years are short though the days seem endless. Treasure them.

Thanks for reading. I know I haven't weaned yet so the title maybe misleading but I know both of us will be ready when the day comes. I would love to know your weaning story!

