

**Q & A
with
Gary
Ezzo**

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Gary Ezzo, founder of Growing Families International, a Chatsworth, California-based ministry, was asked several written questions by the Bradenton Herald. He was allowed more than two weeks for the following written responses to some of those questions:

Herald: *Are you willing to entertain any of your critics' concerns, particularly that the instructions for a breastfeeding mother to not feed on demand may result in a low milk supply, low weight gain and/or early weaning?*

Ezzo: Regarding entertaining the critics' concerns: We do entertain legitimate concerns. But they are few and far between. We have chased down enough of the supposed cases of low weight gain only to find out they had nothing to do with feeding a baby every three hours on our program.

Many of the so-called concerns are more fabricated and exaggerated than real.

Herald: *The course also teaches that demand-style parenting, called "attachment parenting by some," produces colic-like symptoms, instability in feeding and sleep cycles, fear of mother separation and a lack of self-comforting coping skills, among other things. Is there research to back this up and if so, please cite references?*

Ezzo: Yes, the research is available. But you will need to take the time to pull it together, if you are really interested.

Herald: *Some critics say you are not qualified to give such advice regarding infant feeding. What are your qualifications as well as those of Anne Marie Ezzo? When you say Anne Marie has a "background in pediatric nursing," what specifically do you mean? (i.e. education, where employed, and when, etc.)*

Ezzo: Again, who are the critics? What are their families like? Are they sought after by young parents as role models to be emulated?

It is rare to even find a critic who has successfully quoted us correctly. So when you say, "Some critics say we are not qualified," we ask, qualified by whose standard? And surely, education does not make them credible nor does a certificate. We know plenty of lactation consultants who are in desperate need of parent education.

Herald: *Your book has no real bibliography to indicate where your medical information came from. You are not a doctor. Can you tell readers where the medical information specifically came from? If you had a list of advisors, will you provide that?*

Ezzo: If your question is asking if we have medical peer review, the answer is yes. We work with pediatricians, family practice doctors, pediatric neurologists, psychiatrists and certified lactation consultants. All of these constantly interact with our teaching and make recommendations when and if necessary.

Can you have our list? No, these people are too important to be bothered with the trivia served up by the critics.

Herald: *Christians say they have been hurt by what they call the "tone" of the Prep materials. How would you respond to someone who says the materials seem inflexible to those with differing views?*

Ezzo: I'm not sure what you mean by "hurt." Someone was hurt because an author disagrees with their parenting? We do not believe the tone of our book is offensive, but it does challenge the current wisdom by asking parents to make a decision based on what they see and not based on what they read.

The book opens up by charging parents to consider all the parenting styles and options, including ours. We ask new and expectant parents to look at families who follow the demand-feeding model and those who follow ours. Then we ask them to decide, based on what they witness.

Herald: *Your program by its title implies it is 'God's way,' Do you think a parent can be a successful parent and a 'successful Christian,' by using parenting methods differing from what you teach?*

Ezzo: As we say in Prep, God is silent when it comes to infant nurturing. There is no mandate to demand- or schedule-feed your baby. It is a gray area of life. Please do not confuse or swap the program titles. When our critics do that, we know they are either being deceptive or they really don't know what we teach.

Herald: *When you started teaching the Prep course, did you ever envision it being controversial?*

Ezzo: Parenting was written in response to the already present controversy associated with the infant management methods propagated by the La Leche League and attachment parenting advocates.

Years ago, parents came to us out of desperation, seeking an alternative to cranky babies, sleepless nights, low weight gain babies, and the stigma of failure. They were disenchanted with the LLL approach and fearful of the results. They wanted an alternative.

The controversy already existed when we stepped into the picture. What your readers need to understand is that people follow our teachings because they do not like the results they see in demand-feeding households.

Editor's note: La Leche League is an international mother-to-mother support organization for breastfeeding.)

Herald: *Do you think you are misunderstood?*

Ezzo: No. Often, purposefully misquoted and misrepresented by critics (and journalists), but not misunderstood.

Herald: *How did you discover your scheduling techniques for young babies?*

Ezzo: We did not discover routine-feedings. It has been a nursing philosophy practiced for a long time.

RAISING BABIES BY THE BOOK

Bradenton Herald

The teachings of Preparation for Parenting, a parenting program written by Gary and Anne Marie Ezzo, founders of the Chatsworth, California-based Growing Families International, contrast with those taught by the 53,000-member American Academy of Pediatrics, the world's largest organization of pediatricians.

ISSUES	WHAT THE EZZOS TEACH...	WHAT DOCTORS TEACH...
Concerning Sudden Infant Death Syndrome	They question scientific findings which indicate laying an infant down on its back may reduce the chance of SIDS.	Research shows babies sleeping on their backs or sides are at a lower rate for SIDS.
On feeding a baby	They warn parents of "demand feeding" infants, saying it may produce a "high-need" baby with symptoms of colic (excessive unexplained crying), instability in sleep and feeding cycles, perpetual need for comfort nursing, limited self-play adeptness, a demanding toddler and a tired mother, among other things.	Breastfed and bottlefed babies should be treated differently. Breastfed babies should be fed more frequently than their bottlefed counterparts, particularly whenever they provide signals such a nuzzling, making sucking motions, fussing or crying, commonly known as "demand-feeding."
On colic	Characterized by unexplained bouts of intense crying, they say the condition is more prevalent in babies fed on demand. No research references are cited.	The definite cause is unknown. Demand-feeding is not cited as a cause nor is any relationship established between colic and demand breastfeeding.
On mother's ability to produce breast milk	They say longer periods of time between breastfeeding, to a certain degree, will create an increase in milk production in the mother.	The milk-producing hormone prolactin is released while breastfeeding and breastfeeding more frequently causes her to make more milk.
On letting babies cry	They say parents should not respond immediately to a baby's cries, but should instead check on the baby every 15 minutes. A baby may be left to cry to avoid a "predisposition to immediate gratification."	The best way to handle crying is to respond promptly to the infant during the first few months. You cannot spoil a young baby by giving him attention; and if you answer his calls for help, he'll cry less overall.
On determining if an infant is getting enough	They suggest counting the number of wet diapers, in addition to watching for other signs.	Wet and soiled diapers should be counted, in addition to watching for possible signs of dehydration including a sunken in soft-spot, no tears when crying or lethargy.

Information taken from 'Preparation for Parenting,' a course written by Gary and Anne Marie Ezzo and "Your Baby and Young Child, Ages Birth to 5", published by the 53,000-member American Academy of Pediatrics.