

## **The Parent Who Didn't Come Back**

By: Norma Ortiz Escobar and Tori LaChapelle Sproat, LLL of NC

**ONE:** Fatima is a 30-year-old Muslim mother of three children. She came to a LLL meeting when her third child was six weeks old because she was struggling with sore nipples and exhaustion. Under the meeting topic "Bringing Baby Home," Leader Susie talked about how much support she got from her church group four times. There was also a lengthy discussion about drinking alcohol while breastfeeding and everyone laughed about how nice it is to drink again after nine months of abstaining. Fatima never came to another meeting. **What might have made her feel unwelcome? What might you do differently in your group?**

**TWO:** Janet is a 25-year-old Black first time mother. She's been successfully breastfeeding for six months and has attended three meetings. She approached the Leader to ask about how to become a Leader herself. Sarah, the Leader, told her, "Being a Leader is a lot of work. You have to breastfeed for a year and then you can ask again, if you make it that far." Janet never came to another meeting. **What might have made her stay away? What might you do differently in your group?**

**THREE:** Elsa is a 42-year-old Polish mother of three children. Her family immigrated to the USA ten years ago. She had no issues breastfeeding her previous two children, but they are now 12 and 10. Coupled with her latest child being a surprise, breastfeeding feels completely new again. Elsa worries about making enough milk, especially since she feels her doctor hasn't been supportive of breastfeeding. After hearing Elsa has two other children, the Leader, said "Oh, you're an expert now!" The topic for this meeting was making more milk and Elsa mentioned using a Polish remedy she found helpful to make more milk which the Leader discouraged. Elsa never came to another meeting. **What might have made her feel unwelcome? What could you do differently in your group?**

**FOUR:** Korrine is a 16-year-old first time single parent who works and is trying to finish high school. Her WIC Peer Counselor recommended LLL as a way to find support with other parents because her friends just don't understand. At the meeting, the Leader referred to utilizing "your husband" three times when referencing how to get through the night feeds and get things done around the house.

When Korrine asked about what bottles seem to work best for everyone or how much milk to leave with the baby, another parent at the meeting asked "Why would you leave your baby?!" The Leader attempted to remedy this comment by saying, "Some parents choose to work, and need to leave their baby with another caregiver". Korrine never

came to another meeting. **What might have made her stay away? What could you do differently in your group?**

**FIVE:** Sara and Victoria are 28- and 30-year-old first time moms. Sara was the gestational carrier of their baby and Victoria induced a supply to co-nurse with her wife. They decided to go to LLL because a friend said it was a great place for breastfeeding parents to be embraced. The Leader at the meeting asked “which one of you is the birth mom?” and also mentioned loving the TV shows “Modern Family” & “Will and Grace.” This particular group does not traditionally allow partners to attend meetings, so Sara and Victoria tried to self-assess whether they were both “allowed” to attend. They never came to another meeting. **What might have made them feel unwelcome? What could you do differently in your group?**

**SIX:** Max is a 31-year-old first time dad and is chestfeeding his son. He sought out LLL because the Group is known as the place to be with other breastfeeding parents and be accepted/embraced. Max called the leader ahead of time to be sure it was ok and was told, “We support all nursing parents!” At the meeting the Leader said, “Most mothers worry whether their babies are getting enough milk” and how women should embrace motherhood. Max did not attend another meeting. **What might have caused him to stay away? What could you do differently in your group?**

**SEVEN:** Cecilia is a 24-year-old first time mother who is also an amputee (her left arm was amputated above the elbow). She sought out LLL for breastfeeding support and companionship. After the meeting the Leader noted to Cecilia and one other parent that Cecilia’s ability to wear her daughter in a wrap and breastfeed so naturally “especially when you’ve only got one hand” was really great and a true inspiration. Cecilia did not come to another meeting. **What might have made her feel unwelcome? What could you do differently in your group?**

**EIGHT:** Norma is a 20-year-old first time mom and active duty marine. One of her friends back home encouraged her to attend a LLL meeting. Once she got there, the Leader repeatedly talked about how exhausting being a stay-at-home mom was for her. The group also decided to change meeting times for their one meeting a month to a week day during the day instead of two monthly meetings (one on weekends and one on weekdays). Norma did not come to another meeting. **What might have caused her to stay away? What could you do differently in your group?**

**NINE:** Nikki is a 23-year-old first time mom of Mexican descent. Nikki came to a LLL meeting because she’s afraid she has low supply. She explains that she did not feed her baby “colostrums” because it was dirty for the baby and is combination feeding to

make sure her baby is getting enough food. When another parent at the meeting tells Nikki that colostrum is the best gift she could've given her child, the Leader steps in to say that Nikki just didn't know and when you know better you do better. Nikki did not come to another meeting. **What may have made her feel unwelcome? What could you do differently in your group?**

**TEN:** Lisa is a 26-year-old first time mother. A friend dropped her off at the LLL meeting with her baby in an infant car seat. This particular meeting is held inside a baby boutique about a 20-minute walk from public transportation. Most of the parents at the meeting are wearing their babies in brand name wraps and carriers. The meeting topic was nutrition. The Leader frequently talked about how organic foods were the best for mom and baby. When the meeting ended early, Lisa waited outside for her ride home. Lisa did not come to another meeting. **What might have caused her to stay away? What could you do differently in your group?**

**ELEVEN:** Sandra is a 21-year-old Black first-time mother in a wheelchair. At her first meeting, Sandra had a difficult time getting into the meeting room at the Leader's home because she had to use the back door due to the stairs at the front door. At the meeting, the LLL leader had a display of famous parents who have breastfed. All of the celebrities were white and able-bodied. Sandra was also the only person of color in the room. She did not come to another meeting. **What may have made her feel unwelcome? What could you do differently in your group?**