



PERSONAL HISTORY OF BREASTFEEDING AND MOTHERING

This is an outline of the “personal history” segment of your correspondence with the Leader Accreditation Department (LAD). Use it in the manner that suits you best: begin with the section that interests you most, respond in short or essay format, and communicate your reply in one or many installments. Please keep copies of your letters and/or emails.

The personal history consists of two parts: “**About You**” and “**LLL Philosophy**.”

About You

Motivation is an essential element in the work of a La Leche League Leader. What inspired your desire to become an LLL Leader? What would you like to accomplish as a Leader? LLL leadership involves work at home and time away, so it’s important to talk to your family about your goals. Please write about any of your interests, hobbies, other volunteer activities, and education/employment experiences that might be significant to the work of an LLL Leader. Feel free to send your letter “About You” as your self-introduction to your corresponding LAD representative.

LLL Philosophy

Our personal philosophy guides our choices, and what we do as mothers strengthens or changes what we believe; thus there is continual interaction between what we do and what we think. Because the Leader represents LLL, her example is critical to how others see the organization. Her ideas and experiences also become part of her resource for helping mothers through LLL.

Please tell how your childbirth, breastfeeding, and mothering have or have not reflected La Leche League philosophy. To be certain that you have covered all the important areas, write about each concept separately and describe what each of them means to you by relating it to your experience. How did you come to hold it as part of your personal philosophy? What choices have you made because of this philosophy, and how have your current ideas been influenced by your choices? How might you present the concepts to others (for example, at Series Meetings) while showing respect for different beliefs and choices?

On the next page is a list of the LLL concept statements with some specific questions related to personal perspective to suggest information you might include. You are unique, and your experience has both similarities and differences to others’, so please use the questions as guides only. Whether or not you answer these specific questions, be sure to include information you think will help the LAD to understand you, your experiences, and your ideas.

Writing this personal history offers you an opportunity to reflect on and clarify your experiences, beliefs, and goals related to LLL leadership. Your LAD representative will respond to each of your letters, matching your ideas and experience to the criteria for accreditation; requesting additional information, if necessary; and helping you to develop the understanding, skills, and information base you will need as an LLL Leader.

Please write about **each concept separately** by relating it to your experience.

LLL Philosophy: The ten concept statements with sample questions

Mothering through breastfeeding is the most natural and effective way of understanding and satisfying the needs of the baby.

Describe how breastfeeding has helped you to understand and meet your baby's needs. How have you handled nighttime nursing? How did you manage when your baby cried or had a "fussy" time? Please describe any experience with artificial nipples.

Alert, active participation by the mother in childbirth is a help in getting breastfeeding off to a good start.

Briefly tell about your birth experience and first nursings. How do you think these contributed to nursing and to the attachment you and your baby feel?

Mother and baby need to be together early and often to establish a satisfying relationship and an adequate milk supply.

Describe the transition between birth and breastfeeding. Did you have any difficulties in the early weeks? If so, how did you overcome them?

In the early years the baby has an intense need to be with his mother, which is as basic as his need for food.

How has your baby shown you that he needs you as well as your milk? Describe any experience of mother-baby separation in the early years and how your baby's needs have been met during this time. How do you know when your baby is ready to increase separations?

Human milk is the natural food for babies, uniquely meeting their changing needs.

What qualities of your milk have been most important for you and your family?

For the healthy, full-term baby breast milk is the only food necessary until baby shows signs of needing solids, about the middle of the first year after birth.

When and how did you introduce solids and a cup? What signs of readiness did you look for? If you have used bottles, please describe when and how.

Ideally the breastfeeding relationship will continue until the baby outgrows the need.

What are your thoughts about when and how weaning proceeds? If it's part of your experience, describe your baby's weaning.

Breastfeeding is enhanced and the nursing couple sustained by the loving support, help, and companionship of the baby's father. A father's unique relationship with his baby is an important element in the child's development from early infancy.

How is the father's role viewed in your family?

Good nutrition means eating a well-balanced and varied diet of foods in as close to their natural state as possible.

How have you incorporated principles of good nutrition into your family's diet?

From infancy on, children need loving guidance, which reflects acceptance of their capabilities and sensitivity to their feelings.

Describe how you practice loving guidance. How do you handle "rough" times? What are your favorite resources on this topic?

Background Reading/Learning

Required:

- *The Womanly Art of Breastfeeding*
- *Leader's Handbook*
- Childbirth information

The Womanly Art of Breastfeeding contains basic breastfeeding management information as well as practical parenting recommendations, all of which reflect LLL philosophy of breastfeeding and mothering. The 2010 edition of *The Womanly Art* has much more breastfeeding management information than previous editions. Many Leaders find that having this book allows them to answer most of the questions they receive from mothers.

Leader's Handbook is available online at: <http://www.llli.org/leaderpages/leadershandbook> (LLLID and password required). This book offers information about leadership and will be a reference you will use throughout your Leader career. Much of the information in Chapters 6-8 is either outdated, or applies to a specific location. You might look through those chapters and talk with your Leader about which parts of them is pertinent to you. It would be good to look over the contents of "Appendices" so that you can refer to them later.

Childbirth information: Also required is knowledge covering a variety of birthing choices, interventions, and experiences, and their effect on the start of breastfeeding. There are various ways to meet this requirement. Some Applicants have in-depth discussions with a Leader who is well-informed about this topic. Other Applicants attend a conference which focuses on this subject. Applicants are also welcome to read a comprehensive childbirth book. The supporting Leader may be able to share the bibliography issued by the local LLL. Another option is to read the Leader Accreditation Department (LAD) ***Childbirth and Breastfeeding booklet***, online at: <http://www.llli.org/docs/lad/ChildbirthandBreastfeeding.pdf>

Let your LAD representative know when you have read the required items, and send any comments you have. For instance, do you think a particular book will be a good resource for you later, or something you will recommend to others? Do you have any questions or concerns about what you've read?

Recommended:

The *LLL Bylaws* are important reading. When you sign the Statement of Commitment (SoC) at the end of your application, you will be agreeing to "represent La Leche League as a Leader in accordance with the *LLL Bylaws* and policies." You can access these online at <http://www.llli.org/bylaws.html>, or your Group may have a copy.

LLL tear-off sheets contain useful information. There are also a number of books which are highly recommended. Your Leader can tell you which ones she recommends and which ones are most popular with mothers in your Group. It will be helpful to become familiar with what is available in order to make recommendations to mothers looking for books on a specific topic.