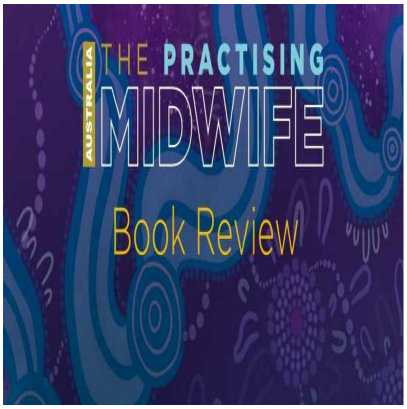


Description

Book Review: Spilt Milk: Honest Breastfeeding Stories by Dani Malone and Elizabeth Yip

Publication Date: 2023

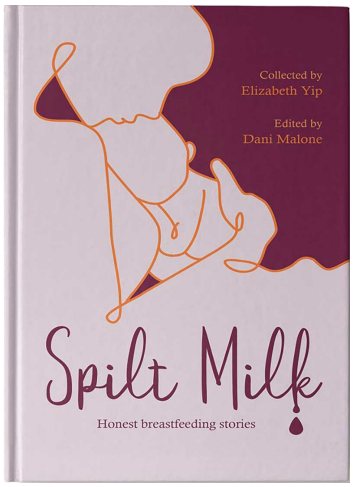
Publisher: Green Hill Publishing

Format: pbk, 311pp

RRP: $27.99

ISBN: 9781922957382

Reviewer: Shelley Macmillan – Midwife and lecturer



After meeting Elizabeth Yip, author of Spilt Milk, at the Australian College of Midwives National Conference in Melbourne, I was eager to review and share her collection of stories with student midwives and maternal and child health nurses to build understanding and empathy for parents experiencing breastfeeding challenges.

A short preface provides introductory and background information related to the physiology and mechanics of breastfeeding before launching into the collection of experiences written by mothers and non-birthing parents, including those by editor Dani Malone and her wife, Vicky. Individual contributions are presented as bite- sized, easily digestible, relatable stories, collated alphabetically by the author's name, avoiding categorisation. Experiences are profoundly personal and multifaceted, reflecting ongoing, recent and often still raw infant feeding journeys alongside stories recounting the more distant past, including those of grandmothers which provide additional context and

acknowledgement of evolving culture, medicine and maternity care.

The concluding dedication beautifully summarises an overwhelming proportion of experiences associated with well-intentioned but poorly informed or time-poor healthcare providers' attempts to support parents. Common themes woven within the collection of stories include exhaustion, anxiety, physical and emotional pain, trauma, grief, disgust, loss of bodily autonomy, assault, loss of confidence, parenting instincts, persistence and preparedness. The book's title acknowledges the English proverb 'no weeping for shed milk' by James Howell (dating back to 1659), precisely how parents describe responding when losing just a few carefully collected drops of painfully and tediously expressed colostrum or breastmilk.

Shared stories also acknowledge (often self-consciously) the gift and joy of breastfeeding, celebrating victories, milestones and humorous moments, including a toddler breastfeeding a toy dinosaur, navigating 2m projectile let-down and breastfeeding a baby in a three-quarter body, non-weight-bearing spika cast. Many contributors found sharing experiences therapeutic, better understanding how breastfeeding shaped them as mothers or parents.

By honouring and sharing breastfeeding stories, Spilt Milk sensitively demonstrates the complexity and emotion associated with infant feeding in a way that is accessible to parents, students and healthcare providers. **TPM**

Category

1. Australia - TPMA
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1. 2025
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