

Specific Examples – Problems Associated with GFI’s Program

Note: The following examples were provided primarily by Nurses and Lactation Consultants. In almost all of the cases the observers confirmed that the babies in question had parents who were attempting to follow the Ezzo program. In a few cases they could not confirm this but believed it to be true because of what they observed with the parents.

Many of these examples illustrate multiple problems but I have grouped them into five general categories: Development Delays/Limited Feedings, Crying Babies/Desensitized Mothers, Refusing Advice/Blind Commitment to Program, Intimidation, GFI’s responses.

Development Delays/Limited Feedings:

- A prominent lactation expert reported that she was working with a four-month-old “former Ezzo baby” who was less than a pound over birth weight two weeks earlier.
- One baby gained four to six ounces per week up until week eight, when the mother began leaving the baby to sleep twelve hours per night according to the Ezzos’ program, though the baby cried several nights. She also cut back to four-hour feedings during the day. In the next two months, the baby gained only two ounces. On physician recommendation, the mother increased daytime feedings to every three hours but still maintained the twelve-hour stretch at night. For two months, the baby had not indicated hunger. In the next month, the baby gained four ounces and constantly sucked her thumb. At that point (five months), the baby began refusing to breastfeed and was referred to various specialists. She received virtually all nutrition via feeding tube for the next six months, as she would not accept any food or drink until she was over twelve months and had six months of therapy.
- Another baby was admitted to the hospital after weighing a pound under birth weight at three weeks. The mother was opposed to waking the baby, even though the baby was too lethargic to wake for feedings. The baby was given a pacifier for hours, whenever she cried and it was not feeding time. A year later, the consultant learned the parents were training as teachers for an Ezzo class.
- A grandmother returned from a visit to her daughter very upset because her grandbaby was being fed on a schedule. The parents and their pediatrician attended the same church. The baby weighed 2 lbs. below birth weight at the six week check up. The pediatrician said they would consider her a newborn and start over tracking her growth. The baby looked like a “starving third world baby.”
- A midwife reported having seen two babies whose parents were attempting to follow the Ezzo program, suffering from failure to thrive. Another midwife reported five such cases.
- One lactation consultant described three clients with severe failure to thrive in four- to six-month-old infants. She noted three similar characteristics: 1) self-sufficient babies, more interested in playing with toys than in human interaction, 2) the mothers’ belief that their

bodies were unable to produce enough milk because the techniques could not be at fault, and 3) depression among the mothers, with feelings of guilt.

- Yet another consultant reported a missionary woman from Africa, who said she had never fed her son during the night, from the time she had left the hospital.
- A baby being fed on the suggested schedule was a pound under birth weight at 2-3 weeks. Rather than feeding more often than 3-4 hours, 28 oz. per day of formula supplement was added so that the baby could be kept on a schedule. When baby began to gain, mother wanted to begin cutting back formula though nothing had been done to increase baby's intake at breast in lieu of the supplement.

Crying Babies/Desensitized Mothers:

- Two mothers conversed on the internet about desensitization to their children's needs while on the Ezzo program. One said when her second child was about six months old, she noticed she "did not have any feelings of empathy towards my children" and became very "irritated with their needs." Another responded that she, too, had noticed a lack of bondedness with her son at around four to five months. The first mother responded, "I am ashamed to say that I could let them cry for over an hour without giving it a second thought. Eventually they did stop, and go back to sleep—or sometimes just lay down with a glazed look on their faces." These two women had eventually decided this was wrong, and were making efforts to be more responsive to their children.
- A woman reported visiting a friend with an eight-day-old baby. When the baby became "frantic with hunger" in the visitor's arms, rooting and crying, the mother insisted it wasn't yet time to feed and refused to hold the baby because she said he would cry more in her arms. After forty-five minutes of crying, the visitor pressured the mother to feed the obviously hungry baby, and she relented, even though it was about thirty minutes before the next scheduled feeding. The same family's older child had been introduced to the program at about ten months and cried about two hours in the morning, an hour in the afternoon, and another one to two hours at bedtime before finally "giving up." The parents sang the praises of the program, saying it had released them from the "hell" of demand feeding.
- On the GFI internet forum, one mother suggested going into another room with music on when a baby's crying became uncomfortable. Another indicated that her child was waking "too soon" from his nap and she had tried to solve this problem by putting him down to sleep just an hour after he had last awakened. As she was typing this comment, she and her husband had "been sitting down stairs listening to him scream for about a half an hour. He now sounds hysterical." She wondered if anyone on the forum had any suggestions. Another mother's suggestion: he was probably just in a transition state from REM to more peaceful sleep, and her own baby had learned to put herself back to sleep after "usually" 5 to minutes of crying but "sometimes" up to 30-45 minutes. The next comment, from yet another mother with a similar problem, wondered if her twelve-week-old son was "already trying to manipulate me."

- A mother reported that a friend let her four-and-a-half-month-old “cry it out” for over two hours because she “knew she was fine and just wanted to be held. Is obviously too spoiled.” This mother found the cries so loud that she and her spouse “had to go sleep in the living room.”
- Another mother reported attending a Lamaze reunion when the class babies were three months old. One was left to cry for forty-five minutes in an infant seat with a blanket over the top, because “it was time for the baby’s nap and that was all there was to it.” The other parents were all disturbed at the parents’ unresponsiveness; the couple finally left the reunion.
- A two-year-old, not walking due to a birth defect, was placed in a playpen in the church nursery, and the staff was ordered to leave him there during her entire absence, at least an hour and a half. He wept so inconsolably that the staff felt compelled to ignore her wishes and picked up the child to comfort him.
- A mother posted on GFI’s internet site that she had to learn “getting your baby to stop crying is not the goal. It is better for your baby...to cry and teach himself how to fall back to sleep.” She went on to advocate finding “ways to muffle out the crying,” for the mother’s sanity. “My attempts to stop the crying always made things worse.” Another mother has reported she took showers to drown out the sound of her baby’s crying. She added, “I took seven showers this morning.”

Refusing Advice/Blind Commitment to Program:

- A GFI “contact mom” (contact moms are followers who receive brief training in how to support others on the program) on GFI’s internet forum advised the mother of a three pound baby on how to schedule, despite the doctor’s advice to feed ad lib.
- A baby who weighed nine pounds, one ounce at birth experienced some early problems keeping sugars stable but was better at discharge. A week later she was only a few ounces below birth weight, but at three months she was still an ounce under birth weight. Parents were in denial that there was a problem because the baby was sleeping eight hours and breastfeeding every three hours.
- A nine-month-old baby’s mother observed to a lactation consultant that he had always been in the low percentiles for weight, but was now dropping off the chart. When the consultant advised that the program’s schedule might be the problem, the mother insisted that her milk was the cause of the problem because it was not adequate for her particular baby.
- A hospital health educator with fifteen years experience as a pediatric nurse, a BSN, CLE, and CLC, and working on a master’s in health education, was accused on a couple’s evaluation form of giving out inaccurate information regarding infant eating and sleeping patterns, with the couple’s added statement that the mother’s milk would not be of good quality if feedings weren’t spaced at least 2½to 3 hours apart.

- Another nurse/lactation consultant in the same hospital advised more frequent feedings for a baby with slow weight gain, but the parents insisted they could not take her advice because it conflicted with the parenting program they had taken at their church.
- A La Leche League Leader was called by a mother following the Ezzos' schedule. The baby's mother said in a number of months they had achieved only a few days where the baby was able to follow the schedule, without excessive crying. The mother was beginning to doubt the wisdom of the approach, but expressed fear to change and then praised the program for helping them to form a "mindset of biblical parenting." At three months old, the baby had gained only one pound since birth and was too weak to cry. The leader felt compelled to report the case to child protective services.
- A mother of an eight-month-old son appealed for advice from another mother on the internet who had posted some concerns about the Ezzos' program. The baby's mother said, "For the past five months we have turned everything upside down for this program,...and in the end I think we had in total,...3 consecutive days where [he] was able to follow the schedule, without excessive crying (longer than a half hour) etc." She went on, "I do see that maybe I've got this all wrong. Yet I'm still so scared...Their curriculum has helped us to form this mindset of biblical parenting that has led us down this search so I give them all the praise in the world."
- A grandmother was helping her daughter and son-in-law with their new baby and became concerned that the baby seemed to be hungry and that the parents were ignoring the baby's cues. When she suggested to her daughter that the baby seemed hungry and might need to be fed a little more often or longer, the baby's father later slipped a note under her door, ordering her to give no more advice unless asked.
- A mother who had newly learned of the Ezzos' principles stood up in her church and "repented" of letting her baby feed on demand. Another church mother questioned whether her toddler was trying to manipulate her when she asked her mother to read a Bible story.
- In response to an *ABC World News Tonight* story in July 1996, a mother posted to GFI's internet site (spelling errors have been corrected): "I have got to set them straight! Especially on the failure to thrive...my baby suffered from this but it was my OWN FAULT: I should have been eating more, exercise less, and drinking tons more...I should have been resting and I should have educated myself better! That is not Gary and Anne Marie's fault!"
- A mother reported a friend who had an underweight baby "on the Ezzo schedule," but was determined to use the program with her next baby, saying, "God wants me to do it this way! There must have been something wrong with me if God's methods didn't work."
- One lactation consultant (also a Christian) who had advised an Ezzo parent on breast feeding problems was told, "On one side I have God...on the other, you." Another Christian Lactation Consultant was told, "Satan has taken over your heart."

Intimidation:

- A childbirth educator and La Leche League leader reported that a friend was successfully and happily nursing her third baby, after her first two had been hospitalized with failure to thrive, eventually diagnosed as possible damage to her breasts following earlier breast surgery. Her pastor's wife had informed her that she was encouraging this third baby's evil nature by nursing him on demand.
- One mother was confronted by her church's GFI leader because the mother was nursing her six-week-old baby in the nursery before leaving after church services. The leader insisted this mother wasn't following the materials "well enough" to get her son where he "should be" on the schedule.
- One woman who posted on the internet about her own anguish over her use of the Ezzos' program was threatened with a lawsuit for libel and defamation by someone who claimed to be involved with GFI. In a later correspondence he said he would seek a cease and desist order if she continued. As a result, she now insists on absolute anonymity when sharing her concerns.
- A daycare provider reported that she had cared for seven babies on the Ezzos' program in the past two years, and every one of the mothers had milk supply problems. She inquired on an internet forum about problems and said she received 119 replies from parents who said they had given up the program due to supply problems. She was amazed to learn that none of these parents had reported back to the program's teachers that they had discontinued it, apparently due to feelings of intimidation.

GFI's responses:

- A La Leche League leader who wrote to the Ezzos mentioned that leaking milk in response to a baby's cry seems to indicate the desirability of feeding the baby. The Ezzos responded, "Your statements about mother's milk dripping when they hear the baby's cry speaks [sic] to your experience as a demand feeding mother, and also your lack of knowledge of breast physiology....Since demand feeding is an emotional response to the baby's cry, rather than a rational response, such defects are common. Mother's [sic] who work from a flexible, but predictable routine have very little problems with the let down reflex and leaking is not part of the mothering experience."
- A GFI representative, when asked about a statement in GFI's materials that conflicted with a citation from a medical journal, cited a 1970's edition of the *World Book Encyclopedia* as his support.