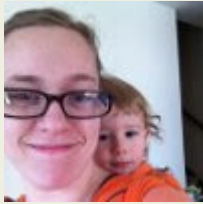


It is Okay to Not Trust Your Doctor



Send her mail. [f](#)

"Balancing on My Toes" is an original column appearing every other Friday at Everything-Voluntary.com, by Angel M. Ethell. Angel lives in the Chicagoland area with her family: sons Teen (13) and Lil G (2) along with their little sister Cassie Pie (dog), her partner Daddy G and father-in-law Grandpa G. She loves learning new things along with learning that she might not always be right... 100% of the time. Archived columns can be found [here](#). BMT-only RSS feed available [here](#).

Everyone knows that there are circumstances that necessitate seeing a doctor. So many that it would be silly to even begin to list them all. Throw in a child and there are many more reasons. Prenatal visits, post-birth visits, well-child check ups, exams, weight checks, and milestone checks. Even without a child that gets sick all the time a parent might see a doctor up to five times in the first year. This leaves many opportunities for that doctor to say something to her/him that may or may not seem "right" to the parent, but because this is person who has gone to school for many years and *should* be able to give sound advice, the parent trusts and follows given advice. This is compounded by ignorance. I do not mean of a bad kind. I just mean that if a person is less experienced he or she may tend to trust others, assuming they are correct in trusting. But much like a mechanic can try to take advantage of a customer that is not educated in auto repair, a doctor that believes his patient will believe him may not explain all possible options.

As a parent we know the drill. Bring the kids (undoubtedly one of them just cannot leave without some toy or shoe they *need*, and you end up late) to the car, drive to doctor, wait in line only to wait some more. Finally once every wit has been brought to the end for the parent, her child's name is called. Thank goodness. Only to wait some more in the exam room. Okay, not so bad. The nurses check vitals and ask if you have any questions or concerns and then leaves to get the doctor. This is maybe the most common thing a parent does out of the house with a new born for the first few months, but after that these visits can be the cause of much stress. As a parent spends more time with their baby they may have more questions. And like many others will trust that their pediatrician, (if you don't use a family practice D.O. like I do) with the most important issues. How much should baby be sleeping, eating, crying, playing and many more quantitative questions arise and it is very tempting to trust one person, but the reality is your doctor is only one person.

That's it: Only One

Helen Keller said, "I am only one person, but still I am one," and she has an awesome point, but that does not really pertain here. Unless your pediatrician is specifically specialized on developmental milestones and has all up to date information from both the WHO (World Health organization) and the AAP (at least here in America, American Academy of Pediatrics) he or she just cannot give the most sound advice. Medicine is a field that is ever developing, so even good advice from 5 to 10 years ago can be bad advice now. Heck, two year old information can be wrong sometimes: just look at the egg-cholesterol argument. Are they good for you? Are they bad for you? The answer, like so many other answers, is just more complex than good or bad; right or wrong.

How Wrong Can a Doctor Be?

When I was a young first-time mom I of course trusted my doctor with everything. I didn't even second guess his advice. But, this doctor told me to feed my son only every three hours and hold him as little as possible. He told me to not under and circumstances bed share and when my milk was running dry because the baby wasn't getting as much as he needed and failed to thrive the doctor pushed formula on me instead of just giving better breastfeeding advice. He was a man and never breastfed, but gave me advice like he had. This same doctor recommended I let my infant "self-soothe" himself to sleep and on top of all that he recommended that I stay in an emotionally abusive relationship "for the good of the baby." Looking back I realize the *all* this advice was bad! And I followed it! I feel horrible every time I think about it. That was almost 14 years ago now. Not so bad you say? Because its a long time ago and we know better now, right? A year ago I asked our family practice doctor if its still pretty normal for a fifteen month old baby to still wake so many times a night. I already knew the answer was yes, but I was looking for something to make me feel like I was still doing okay. Well this doctor, in 2012, told me that even though its hard I just have to let my baby cry or he will never sleep through the night. I was dumbfounded. The WHO and the AAP both sway away from cry it out (CIO).

Just Goes to Show

So, it *is* okay to not trust your doctor. Even if you want to. You don't have to. These days the Internet can really help a parent research the many different opinions of those both experienced in medicine, or just plain old experienced. Its not that hard either and if you have any experience with finding good sources its even easier. Google, of course, is a powerful tool for this and so are the many social web sites available. So now when I have a question that is not a medical emergency I reach out to my community online and I do my own research to help my decisions regarding my children. This has personally empowered me. I find it liberating to know that I don't have to trust my doctor. Once I realized that they are just people with human failings I felt better about my experience with my older son that

truly put me off the idea of having more children for 11 and a half years. I felt empowered to have the birth that I wanted the second time around and had the confidence to really understand that while they do have my best interest at heart, usually, they may not have all the up-to-date facts that would be best for my health and the health of my baby.

Ask questions! Do research!

Namaste