

HENRY and me



Busy working mum, Gemma Priestley, 31, has completed HENRY's (Healthy Exercise Nutrition for the Really Young) one-to-one programme, offered through Better Start Bradford. In this blog Gemma shares the difference HENRY has made to her family's life.

Gemma's Story

I often struggle to attend family courses and activities as I only have Monday's free. When I found out about HENRY's one-to-one programme, I jumped at the chance to take part as they offered to do it in my home on my day off.

My two-year-old son Logan and I have on going reflux conditions, which impacts on the food we can eat. I could only get Logan's medicine down with his formula milk; I thought if I took the formula away I would not get his medicine down, and it was holding me back from improving his eating habits. Doing the HENRY course gave me a push to make the change he needed.

Through the course, I was able to swap his formula for real milk. I realised that just because he had refused at the start, his initial issue had become my issue. In the end, it was not so hard to make the change after all.

I had also taken his snacks away, thinking that was a good thing, but that meant he was really hungry at mealtimes and eating too much and too fast, which was probably affecting his reflux.

The course offered much more than advice around nutrition though. I realised that I was making Logan older than his time and trying to do more advanced activities with him. HENRY provides you with lots of suggestions for what's good and healthy for young children. Some I use and some I don't, but that's the beauty of the course: you take from it what you need to take.

Activity Wall



I have developed an 'activity wall', and because Logan is only two, I am taking photos of all of the activities we do and stick them on the wall. Logan simply points to the photos to show me which activity he would like to do. It's such a lovely way to display his work and for him to easily communicate with me. I even have friends that have copied the idea from me!

Initially I was doing the course to help with feeding Logan, but it really helps you to look at other habits you may get into. We were one of those families that would use the television as a 'babysitter'. My husband Richard, Logan and I would all eat in front of the television and we would let Logan watch it before bedtime, thinking it was a calming influence.

Healthy changes

We have now looked again at our TV habits. Logan's bedtime routine is now amazing; we have a little quiet time play in his bedroom, get pyjamas on, settle down and read books and then leave him in his bedroom to go to sleep. He has even started shutting the bedroom door on me so I will go!

As for meals, I got rid of Logan's highchair and he now has a seat on his chair and sits at the table with us for meals. We have real family time with no television. We also have a meal reward chart, and even when Logan has gone to bed, me and Richard will reward ourselves with stickers if we sit down and have a meal together.

Thanks to the HENRY course, I feel a lot more confident as a parent, and we have not only learned a lot of things that we can do as a family to be healthier, but also how to take time out for yourself. I did the course just because I wanted a healthier balance. You don't get judged and I think everyone who does the course will take something away that they didn't consider before starting it.

Families expecting babies in the Better Start Bradford area are being encouraged to get involved with its Welcome to the World project, to help them prepare for life with a new baby. Welcome to the World is a free antenatal course with a difference: friendly groups of mums, dads and carers meet in local community venues over eight weeks to explore the changes babies bring and how they can be provided with the best possible start in life. It aims to help more families in our area access important antenatal advice.

Welcoming Bradford Babies to the World



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Noshi Iqbal, who is now proud mum of baby Salman said, “One of the best decisions I have ever made was attending the Welcome to the World sessions. This was my first baby and I had zero experience, but I wanted to make sure Salman had the best start possible. Not only did the session arm me with lots of information, coping strategies and how to involve the family, it puts a lot of things into perspective. It also opens windows to other services and activities that will benefit us.”

Welcome to the World is relevant for all parents in the Better Start Bradford area expecting babies, whether it's their first child or not.

Mrs Begum said, “The sessions boosted my confidence. The information I got was really useful and a great refresher for me – I thought it was a brilliant course. My older children are nine and seven so I felt a bit rusty when it came to bringing a new baby into the world. I found the course really helpful, especially when we watched a DVD about techniques used to control our emotions, plus a lady came in to talk about baby and child car seat safety.”

Topics covered on the course include:

- Looking after your baby while they are in the womb
- Practical tasks of caring for a new baby
- Communicating and bonding with babies
- Understanding baby brain development
- Exploring your future and the move into parenthood
- Exploring your roots, traditions, hopes and concerns
- Considering how we look after ourselves