Breastfeeding as intertwining between mother and infant

**Background**
For most women, breastfeeding is an essential part of the childbearing period. Yet, the meaning of breastfeeding from women’s perspective is scantily explored. Therefore, the aim of this study is to describe women’s lived experiences of initiating breastfeeding.

**Method and approach**
A reflective lifeworld research design based on phenomenological philosophy was used. Eight women were interviewed within two month after giving birth.

**Result**
The essential meaning of the lived experience of initiating breastfeeding, in spite of good conditions, i.e. experience as ‘well-functioning’, is conceptualized as, “A movement from a bodily performance to an embodied relation with the infant and oneself as a mother”. This constitutes a balancing act experienced as an existential challenge, which is to understand and meet the needs from the infant as well as from oneself. The movement, from breastfeeding as a bodily performance toward an embodied relation, entails a separate strives to manage breastfeeding, both from mother and from infant. Nevertheless, attaining confidence in one’s ability to breastfeed, the infant’s responses to breastfeeding is essential. Through breastfeeding, mother and infant become intertwined in a way forming an entity. Thus, initiating breastfeeding is more than a biological adaptation. Breastfeeding interlaces biological and existential issues that cannot be separated. According to these, it is suggested that health care professionals to reject the idea of breastfeeding merely as meals or eating for the infant. Instead, they ought to embrace its origin, namely as a way to closeness between mother and infant.