Nursing strikes happen when your baby is so distracted by all her new discoveries that she seems disinterested in nursing and may refuse the breast. Many moms assume that this is a sign that baby is weaning and ready to give up breastfeeding; this is often NOT the case. Nursing strikes are often temporary and can signal an exciting developmental milestone, though this may cause temporary disruptions and frustration.

During a nursing strike, some moms may feel rejected by their baby. If you feel this way, it can help to remind yourself that this is a normal part of their development. Try not to be discouraged and continue to offer the breast even if your baby nurses for a moment before she pulls away or doesn’t nurse as long as usual. No strike lasts forever, and don’t take this as a sign – especially in the early months – that she wants to wean completely or that there is an issue with your milk supply. Try nursing baby in a quiet room away from distractions like TV or siblings. You can also try holding a favorite toy or wearing a nursing necklace. These will keep baby focused on you and the task at hand.

As this phase passes, more than likely your baby will return to you for the comfort that nursing provides, and you can continue your breastfeeding relationship. If the nursing strike does turn out to be baby’s sign that she wants to wean, appreciate the time you have had together and continue to offer your baby the breast so she can sometimes take it and wean gradually. Take comfort in the fact that you have given your baby the best start in life and provided her with benefits that will stay with her forever.