

from one preemie parent to another

*If you want to become whole, let yourself be partial.
If you want to become straight, let yourself be crooked.
If you want to become full, let yourself be empty.
If you want to be reborn, let yourself die.
If you want to be given everything, give everything up.*

— *Tao Te Ching* (Stephen Mitchell translation), Chapter 22

I'm assuming that you purchased this book with a sense of hope or expectation that within its pages you would find some explanation or rationale as to why your baby is in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU). I know because when my journey in the NICU began, I did the same thing. I purchased every book that might provide a reason why this happened to our family or a way to make me feel better about the situation. I quickly realized that this experience is not about “why.” It is about the “how” — how to cope with this unexpected reality; how to find joy in pain; how to find hope in the face of despair; and how to celebrate life in the face of death.

After reading the final page of the last book I'd ever purchase on premature babies, it became clear to me that there was too much information on the medical issues involved and not enough on the transformative aspects of prematurity. I had to be stripped down to my soul and rebuilt from the inside out so that I could receive the great gifts of my premature twins. And it is my intention to show others how to grow, as I did, through this experience.

At the outset, it was my intention to tell my story in a way that honors the NICU experience, provides the reader with a supportive embrace, and gives an umbrella of encouragement under which to walk during the NICU journey.

And what do I know of this journey? Unfortunately, quite a bit more than I ever would have imagined. You see, perhaps like you, I had no idea what to expect in the surreal world of the NICU I often stared in disbelief at my tiny twins and wondered how I would ever right myself from this experience. I felt lost, alone, and vulnerable among the alarms and ringing bells. I wasn't even sure if I should try and remember the nurses' names because I didn't know how permanent any of this was. I didn't know what to think, what to say, or how to act. The only thing I knew for certain was that I wanted my babies to live.

After three weeks of being in a state of shock, I realized that I, too, wanted to live. I did not want to feel sad or scared. I did not want to hesitate at the entrance of the NICU, weak with dread at the thought of what medical drama might wait inside. I wanted to stop replaying the images of frail, feeble sick babies that haunted my dreams and waking hours. They took a toll on my body, my mind, and caused distance between me and my other two healthy children.

It was also at three weeks that I held my son for the first time since his birth. I felt the strength of his heart and the grip of his tiny hand on my pinky finger. I knew then that it was time to travel this NICU journey with the intention of being an inspired mother whose power was only matched by that of my twins.

I had a clear picture of the person that I would need to become in order to provide the support, love, and protection that my babies (and all my children) needed in order to survive and thrive. I composed five simple Principles of P.E.A.C.E. that guided and influenced everything I did and thought...then and now.



Principles of P.E.A.C.E.

1. The **POWER** of intention is greater than any current reality.
2. Everything is **ENERGY**.
3. **ALL** things will move into balance eventually.
4. **CARING** for myself precedes caring for anyone else.
5. **EVERYTHING** is exactly as the Universe intended it to be.

THE POWER OF INTENTION IS GREATER THAN ANY CURRENT REALITY

Intention is an invisible force that gives power to whatever you want to create. Intention is one of the tools you can access to gain an emotional advantage over the NICU. The concept of intention is explored more in the “U” section of *Preemie Parents*.

EVERYTHING IS ENERGY

Energy is a direct line from your body, mind, and spirit to the Universe. Everything and anything you think about manifests itself in some way... eventually. The Universe gives you whatever you say and focus on. It is critical to manage your energy — your thoughts, feelings, and speech — so that you can invite goodness into your life and the life of your baby.

ALL THINGS WILL MOVE INTO BALANCE EVENTUALLY

No matter how disconnected you might be feeling or the amount of discord in your life, all things will move into balance. Each element of your life will right itself because it is the natural order of things. If you remember this, you will be comforted by the knowledge that, eventually, harmony will prevail.

CARING FOR MYSELF PRECEDES CARING FOR ANYONE ELSE

Unless you are feeling whole and healthy, you will not be able to support your babies, your spouse, your children, or anyone who is relying on you for strength. The whole person includes your physical body, your mental

body, your emotional body, and your spiritual body. Take time each day to nurture each of these “bodies” so that you can nurture others. This principle is further explored in the “I” section of *Preemie Parents*.

EVERYTHING IS EXACTLY AS THE UNIVERSE INTENDED IT TO BE

Rather than push against unwanted things (which ultimately causes you to focus on them, activating the Universe), fill your head with images of what you would like to have, to be, or to do. Once you fully accept your current situation without reservation, you will see opportunities for personal growth in every experience that you have, whether you judge it as good or bad.

These five simple principles are the underpinning of *Preemie Parents*. I used them to strengthen my beliefs that the Universe makes no mistakes, everything happens for a reason, and that there are always lessons to be learned. The principles of P.E.A.C.E. provide the framework for understanding how I transformed my NICU experience from one of great despair to one of extraordinary personal growth.

I was walking through the hospital parking lot on a glorious sunny day and I had a thought, as clear as the sky was cloudless. This thought literally stopped me in my tracks. I stared off into the distance as I heard the reality of my situation whispered in my ears. *These babies were not premature. They came exactly at the right time, for all of the right reasons, as was predestined for them by the Universe.* In fact, I was the one who was premature. I was not ready to redefine my life and expectations, to be jolted out of my comfort zone, to be made to face the realities of life and death, or to decipher trivia from importance. The bottom line is this: *We must redefine our beliefs about prematurity so that we can be entirely open to the opportunity for personal growth, embrace an enlightened life, and extend ourselves to our families without limits.*

As you read this book, I encourage you to experience it and to live its lessons. For when you do, you too will experience amazing transformation as you await your baby’s homecoming. As we walk this journey together, I thank you for trusting me with your time and spirit.