

5 WAYS TO *Find Joy* IDEAS FOR PREEMIE PARENTS



By Tami C. Gaines

Your NICU journey wasn't part of your original plan, and every family finds their own unique ways to navigate this time. While there are countless paths to finding light in challenging moments, here are five approaches that many NICU parents have found helpful:

Find strength in stillness. Take time to breathe, pray, or meditate. This simple practice can help build your emotional resilience and give you the strength you need for each day ahead. Some parents find peace in morning prayers, while others prefer quiet evening reflection – explore what resonates with you.

Share your heart. Consider being open about your fears and concerns – with your partner, family, trusted friends, or your care team. Many parents find that naming their worries can lessen their power, creating more space to focus on moments with their little one. Your NICU team has supported many families through similar journeys and can be an incredible source of understanding.

Celebrate the tiniest wins. In the NICU, even the smallest steps forward matter. Maybe your baby grasped your finger today? Took a full feeding? Slept peacefully? These moments are victories worth celebrating, and keeping a simple list of daily wins can help you notice progress. Each small step is part of your baby's unique story.

Reach out to help others. Some parents find that lifting others' spirits helps brighten their own day too. Whether it's sharing a kind word or offering to grab coffee for someone who's had a long day, these small gestures can create connection and perspective. Supporting others can help you feel less alone in your own journey.

Trust the journey. While this path wasn't what you expected, staying open to growth and learning can reveal unexpected moments of joy. Many NICU parents discover new forms of strength and wisdom through their experience. Your story matters, and each day brings fresh opportunities for hope.

These are just a few of the many ways to find light during your NICU stay. Every family's journey is different, and you'll likely discover your own meaningful ways to find joy along the way. Trust your instincts and be gentle with yourself as you navigate this time.