

NICU PARENTING: COPING WITH COMPARISONS



It's common to compare your family to others. Setting boundaries, practicing self-compassion, and finding support can help.



PICK YOUR VILLAGE

Ask the NICU team about support groups.

Sharing experiences with other parents can be comforting. Remember, everyone's experience is different.

Reach out for support.

Friends and family can help with logistics or simply be a listening ear. Even if they don't fully understand your situation, their presence can be comforting.

Prioritize what you need right now.

It may be difficult to spend time with families whose children don't have medical needs. Consider limiting contact or setting boundaries around topics you might discuss.



EXPECT CHALLENGING EMOTIONS

Be patient with your reactions.

Feelings of sadness, resentment, grief, and jealousy can occur when interacting with families who have not had a NICU stay or have had an uncomplicated birth.

Acknowledge your experience.

Your situation is likely different from what you imagined. Give yourself permission to grieve what was lost through your NICU stay.

Treat yourself like a close friend.

If a friend was going through something difficult, you'd likely show them kindness and compassion.



BE SELECTIVE WHEN USING SOCIAL MEDIA

Take a look at who you follow.

Experts may provide objective information, whereas "lifestyle" accounts can give insight into a specific family's experience.

Consider following other NICU parents.

Remember that their family's situation is just as unique as yours and may not show the whole story.

Pay attention to how you feel.

After looking at different social media accounts, check in with yourself. Consider limiting your use if you notice negative thoughts or stress.



PARENT THE CHILD YOU HAVE

Trust yourself.

You understand your family's specific needs better than anyone else.

Honor your values.

Prioritize the activities, rituals, and traditions that are most meaningful to your family.

Find joy.

Focus on the things that make your child wonderful and what you love about being their parent.

