

RETURNING TO WORK WITH A BABY IN THE NICU

HONOR YOUR FEELINGS

It's normal to experience a range of feelings about going back to work. You might notice feelings of guilt, joy, dread, or relief, among others.

Some find it helpful to use a mantra when challenging feelings arise.

I feel guilty right now, but I won't feel this way forever.

I am returning to work to support my family.

I can't be in two places at once. I am doing the best that I can.

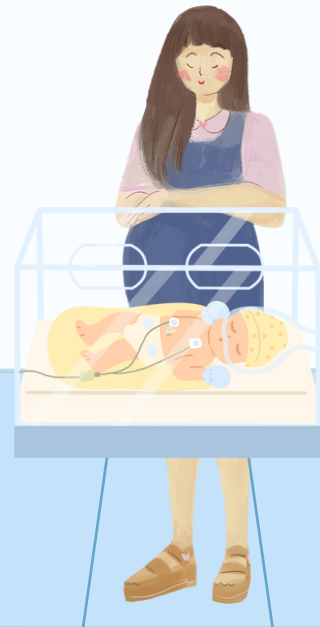
MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR NICU TIME

Try to be present when you are in the NICU. If possible, turn your work phone off.

Find ways to intentionally bond with your baby. Talk. Read. Sing. Your baby knows your voice.

Leave your scent. Leave a t-shirt or a scented cloth with your baby when you are apart.

Make their NICU space feel more like home. Bring family photos, a special blanket, or artwork from siblings to decorate their space.



FIND BALANCE

Make time for yourself. Take a walk. Read a book. Take care of your body.

Consider your own needs. After work, you might need to go home to rest for a bit before going to the NICU.

NAVIGATE THE LOGISTICS

Decide what you want to share about your situation with your employer. For more on this, check out our [“Sharing Your NICU Story”](#) tip sheet.

Reach out to your NICU social worker for help navigating parental leave and insurance.

Ask for the flexibility you need. New parents are often entitled to protections, such as pumping breaks and time off to care for sick children.

Is it possible to start work later, so I can make it for early morning rounds?



ASK FOR SUPPORT

Turn to trusted coworkers for support.

If you can, **outsource tasks** like cooking or doing chores to the family members and friends who are asking what they can do to help.

“Finding a balance between NICU and home is hard. Nothing outside the NICU seems to matter as much as the battle that is going on inside. But there are things outside the NICU that still need your attention.” - [Hand to Hold](#)”

