

HOW TO FIND CALM COMING HOME WITH YOUR NICU BABY

A Gentle Nervous
System Guide for Moms
Who Are Still Holding
So Much



HI THERE!

WE'RE SO GLAD
YOU'RE HERE.

WE ARE 2 NICU
MOMS GET IT.

EMILY IS A EARLY
CHILDHOOD OT
AND GRIEF
COACH.

ATARA IS A 3X
NICU MOM &
MENTEAL
HEALTH
CLINICIAN.



This is a gentle, science-backed guide to help you feel steady, present, and supported as you transition home

Bringing your baby home from the NICU is something you dreamed about.

And yet...

it doesn't always feel how you expected.

You might feel:

- On edge, even when things are "fine"
- Afraid to sleep
- Constantly checking breathing, color, movement
- Overwhelmed by decisions
- Disconnected from yourself or even your baby

This doesn't mean something is wrong with you.

It means your nervous system has been through something intense.

The NICU didn't just impact your baby.

It shaped your brain, your body, and your sense of safety.

This guide will help you gently come back to center without forcing yourself to "just relax."



WHAT'S ACTUALLY HAPPENING

(The Simple Science)

After the NICU, your brain is still in **protection mode**.

It learned:

"Things can change fast."

"Stay alert."

"Don't miss anything."

This is called **threat conditioning**.

Your body isn't trying to make things harder.

It's trying to keep your baby safe.

So when you feel anxious at home, it's not because home isn't safe.

It's because your nervous system hasn't caught up yet.

Calm isn't something we force.

It's something to **teach your body again**.

THE GOAL FOR THIS WEEK

This is important:

Your goal is not to feel perfectly calm.

Your goal is to feel **5% more safe in your body.**

That's it.

These small shifts create real healing.

TIP:



Release the expectation that you will be “back to normal” in the next few weeks.

CREATE A “SAFE ENOUGH” ENVIRONMENT

Your nervous system responds to your surroundings.

Start here:

- Connect with natural sunlight
- Limit noise where you can
- Choose one place in your home that feels calm
- Sit in the same chair when feeding or holding baby

Repetition tells your brain:

“This is familiar. This is okay.”



What part of my home feels the most calming right now?

Is there one small change I could make to this space to help my body soften?

**GENTLE
REMINDER:**

**SAFETY
DOESN'T
HAVE TO BE
PERFECT TO
BE FELT.**

When I sit here, what sensations do I notice in my body?

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REGULATE BEFORE YOU REASSURE

When anxiety spikes, your instinct is to check your baby.

Instead, try this first:

Pause.

Breathe.

Then check.

Try:

- Inhale through your nose
- Long, slow exhale through your mouth
- Repeat 3–5 times

This helps your body come out of urgency so you're **responding**, not reacting.

What do I notice in my body right before I feel the urge to check my baby?



What shifts in my body after a slow exhale?

A MANTRA:

**I AM
BUILDING
THE BRIDGE
BACK TO
SELF-TRUST.**

What would it feel like to trust myself for just a moment?

VAGUS NERVE SUPPORT

When your mind spirals, bring your body back.

Tilt your head to one shoulder.

Look to the upper corner.

Hold for 30 seconds or until you
swallow, sigh or yawn.

This increases blood flow
to the vagus nerve
and supports relaxation.

Then shift eyes to lower corner and
hold.

Now try the other side.

REPEAT THIS:

**I'M NOT TRYING TO FORCE CALM.
I AM NOTICING THE MOMENTS MY BODY BEGINS
TO FIND IT.**

What do I notice as I practice this technique? Do my eyes want to settle anywhere in particular?
What happens in my body as my gaze softens?

1ST OBSERVATION

First I notice, _____

_____.

2ND OBSERVATION

Then, what? my breathing changing at all, even slightly? Do I feel any warmth, heaviness, or softening somewhere in my body?

_____.

FINALLY

What feels different between the beginning of this and now? Is my body giving me any signals of settling or slowing down?

_____.



BORROW REGULATION

You don't have to do this alone.
Your nervous system calms through connection.

- Sit near someone safe
- Let someone hold the baby while you breathe
- Text someone who understands

Co-regulation is not weakness.

It's how your nervous system was designed to heal.

Who feels safe enough for me to be around right now?
What makes me feel supported by them?



What comes up when I consider asking for help?
Can I let myself receive, even just a little?



NOURISH YOUR NERVOUS SYSTEM

Your body is depleted after everything
you've been through.

Simple support matters:

- Eat regularly (even small snacks)
- Add minerals (think: salt, magnesium bath flakes, potassium-rich foods)
- Stay hydrated with broths & structured water

Stability in your body
supports stability
in your emotions.

How does my body feel when I'm under-fueled or dehydrated?



After eating or drinking, do I notice any shift in my mood or energy?

**YOUR BODY
ISN'T
SEPARATE
FROM YOUR
EMOTIONS.**

**IT'S PART OF
THE SAME
SYSTEM.**

What is one small way I can support my body right now?

REDUCE DECISION FATIGUE

You've been making high-stakes decisions for too long.

For this week:

- Keep routines simple
- Wear the same comfortable clothes
- Eat repeat meals

Less decision-making = less nervous system overwhelm.
You need the little wins, mama.

WHAT DECISIONS TODAY ARE ACTUALLY NON-ESSENTIAL?
WHERE CAN I SIMPLIFY INSTEAD OF OPTIMIZE?

MAKE A LIST:

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Less pressure = more capacity for calm.

EXPECT EMOTIONAL WAVES

Feelings that are allowed tend to soften.

You may feel:

- Relief
- Fear
- Gratitude
- Grief

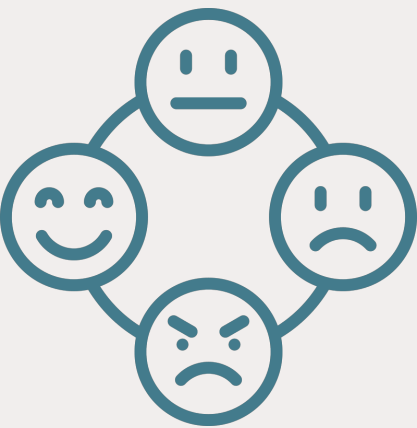
Sometimes all in the same **hour**.

This is normal.

You are not going backwards.

Your body is processing.

What emotions have been coming up for me today?
Can I name what I'm feeling without trying to change it?



Where do I feel this in my body?

What would it look like to let this feeling move through, instead of pushing it away?

WHEN IT FEELS LIKE TOO MUCH...

You don't have to push through this alone.

If you feel:

- Constant panic
- Unable to sleep even when baby sleeps
- Intrusive thoughts
- Disconnection or numbness

This is your nervous system asking for support. We are teaching your body:

"We made it home."

REMEMBER:



You are responding to an experience where your baby's safety was uncertain.

Of course your body is still alert.

YOU MADE IT THROUGH
SOMETHING INCREDIBLY HARD.

And now you're here.

Holding your baby.
Learning a new rhythm.
Finding your way back to yourself.

Slow is okay.
Gentle is enough.

You're already doing better than
you think. Promise.

♡ Atara &
Emily

AN INVITATION



If coming home feels heavier than you expected...
you are not alone.

Inside we explore:

- How trauma lives in the nervous system
- Why anxiety doesn't just "go away"
- Gentle tools to actually feel calm in your body again
- How to rebuild trust with yourself and your baby

JOIN US IN THE NICU HEARTS COLLECTIVE



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