

# STAYING IN THE MOMENT



**Tips for Parents of Infants with Special  
Healthcare Needs**

Human brains don't like uncertainty.

It's normal for parents to worry about the future when their infant is diagnosed with a chronic medical condition, has a prolonged hospitalization, or isn't meeting the usual developmental milestones. The brain immediately begins to create future scenarios, and our minds begin planning and worrying not just about a lack of information in the present, but about things that have not (and might not) occur.

When you let concerns about the future go and just hold your child's hand or foot, or look at your child's eyelashes, or into their eyes, it can be a beautiful experience. Notice how, as you relax your muscles and slow your voice and movements, your child's movements and breath may slow, and they may also relax.

It can also be interesting to play with the exercise of naming three things that are good about the current moment. Many people find that this is a great way to refocus back what is happening here and now.

These good things do not have to be large or overwhelming; they can be as simple as 'my fingers are finally warm even though it is January in Minnesota', or 'the IV pump has stopped beeping'.

(Parents of older children and teenagers, for instance, will often list the fact that an infant's toes are still quite kissable as being something that is good.)

One last word about staying in the present moment:

Over the years, many parents have asked me, "Why shouldn't I expect the worst possible outcome? After all, then I can be pleasantly surprised if something better happens."

When the human brain plans for the worst, and "time travels" into the future, we pay no attention to the here and now. Worrying about and expecting the worst possible outcome means missing out on what is happening right here, right now.

That outcome could happen, and it is something that I would recommend discussing with your care team, making sure you have plans in place for if need be, and then putting aside-- because in this moment, right now, your child is here, and that outcome has not happened.

And this? This is a moment that you do not want to miss.

With clarity, courage, and compassion--

Dr. Stella Evans, MD, FAAP

Life Coaching for Parents of Children with Special Healthcare Needs

<https://stellakevansmd.as.me/>