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Improved parental self-care during the NICU and beyond

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When babies are born and admitted in the NICU for a prolonged period of time, evidence-based research has revealed increased level of anxiety, stress and post-partum depression affecting NICU parents. These psychological conditions interfere with their ability to bond, breastfeed and care for their child while in the NICU and upon transitioning to home. As they go through their NICU journey, the uncertainty of not knowing whether their baby will live or die can cause their inability to do self-care to meet their own basic needs. They also have high tendencies to feel isolated and alone that can cause major psychological issues common to NICU parents. The main objective is to decrease the incidence in psychological problems that are related to the NICU. Improved self-care will also improve breast feeding rates, parent bonding and parental emotional states throughout the child's life span. Exercise releases a natural hormone, serotonin that regulates one's psychological status or mood. By improving one's mood, they have the ability to deal with stressful situations better. Self-confidence and self-efficacy are also positively affected giving parents increased belief in caring for themselves and a medically fragile child. Program development based on self-care for these families is starting in antepartum and immediately after arriving in the NICU. There would be varying different levels of self-care from basic human needs, medication, yoga, meditation, walking or more intense workouts. This program would also come with a virtual NICU community where there would be nothing but positivity to help one another understand they are not alone and the importance of learning to take care of yourself so you can then take care of you, NICU graduate and your family.

Biography

Jennifer Miller has 19 years of Neonatal ICU experience in both the capacity of a Registered Nurse and Neonatal Nurse Practitioner. Jennifer has a passion for the overall well-being of NICU families. Her strong commitment and motivation ignited her into developing and creating a NICU Parent Advisory Council (Phoenix AZ 2013) to support families who are faced with the physiological and psychological challenges inside and outside of the NICU walls. Her purpose of connecting current and veteran NICU families together has earned an excellence award in the Neonatal Practitioner Innovator category from MEDNAX Health Solutions Partner. She is also a personal health coach who enjoys being physically active through travelling around the world while consuming the magnificent outdoor activities of her home state of Colorado. She is an outstanding advocate who has a vision of making each NICU parent healthier through fitness and adopt an early self-care pattern improving the entire physical and psychological well-being to raise healthier Neonatal ICU baby graduates.

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