

How Coaching Helps Premie Parents Thrive Post-NICU

An Interview with Premie Parent Coach

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Premie Parent Coach, **Gigi Khonyongwa-Fernandez, BS, MSC, Certified Professional Coach (Distinction) of Families Blossoming LLC**, is a premie and special needs parent herself and says, “Premie parents can and often do lose themselves when caring for their child. It’s my goal to help them find themselves again.”

So what is a Premie Parent Coach?

A Premie Parent Coach is a Professional Life Coach who specializes in working with parents of premies. Actually ‘Premie Parent Coach’ is not an official title as such but one that I created in order to highlight the unique group of parents I have the privilege to work with.

How can a Premie Parent Coach help our community of families?

The NICU experience and all of its after-effects doesn’t end once your baby leaves the NICU. In fact, for many premie parents, their journey is only just beginning once they arrive home. And it’s often during this post-NICU phase, that parents experience a vicious cycle of feeling overwhelmed, anxious, angry, guilty and stuck. This is further impacted if their child has ongoing medical and developmental issues and/or has special needs. Premie parents face unique challenges on a daily basis, different from the norm.

Using proven coaching techniques and principles, coaching helps parents overcome these challenges in a positive, transformative and forward-moving way. The goal is for parents to reach a point of hope, clarity and optimism for their lives in whatever way this is manifested and beneficial for them and their families.

Coaching can help by providing premie and special needs parents invaluable tools they can use to become unstuck and begin moving forward again in their lives both as parents and as individuals.

Does a Premie Parent Coach work in person or by phone?

Both. Typically the in-person sessions are done with parents who live in the same geographical area as the Coach, and telephone sessions occur independent of location. A coaching relationship, on average, lasts for three (3) months with the sessions occurring either weekly or bi-weekly. Families Blossoming LLC also offers both group and online coaching programs.

How do I go about finding a Premie Coach? What certifications should he/she have?

It is recommended that your Coach has completed formal certified coach training and preferable that they are affiliated with a recognized coaching organization, such as the International Coach Federation (ICF), which focuses on the continued

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advancement of the coaching profession. To find a qualified coach, you can click on the ICF's website: <http://www.coachfederation.org/>.

The most important thing to determine with any Coach is whether or not you have a connection with them. The coaching relationship is a confidential, intimate, challenging one and can sometimes feel downright intrusive, so it is imperative that you work with a Coach you trust and who ensures that you are safe and secure to share what you need to share within that environment.

So are the frequent triggers that get a parent of a preemie seeking out a coach?

You may consider working with a Preemie Parent Coach if you are a preemie and/or special needs parent and:

- Feel overwhelmed, lonely, isolated and sometimes ill-equipped as a parent
- Feel frequent waves of emotions (i.e. guilt, anxiety, anger)
- Experience a loss of your identity, anxiety over whether your child will develop normally and/or difficulties in your relationships
- Want to move forward but feel stuck

Learn more about Gigi Khonyongwa-Fernandez, BS, MSC, Certified Professional Coach (Distinction) and Families Blossoming at www.FamiliesBlossoming.com

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