

Story-Telling Attention-Refocusing Protocol

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Objective: To assess the effect of a contact-free, Story-Telling Attention-Refocusing (STAR) intervention on the acute stress of parents whose infant is in the NICU.

Study Design: A block randomized single-blind trial was conducted in a level II and III NICU at Kingston Health Sciences Centre (KHSC). A computer-generated algorithm determined block randomization by group, which ensured blinding of neonatal providers and participants to minimize cross-contamination. A block size of nine per arm was instituted wherein nine participants were assigned to the experimental group, and the proceeding nine participants were assigned to the control group.

Results: Twenty-one parents completed the study. Results revealed that overall PSS:NICU stress scores lowered significantly within the intervention group ($p = 0.04$), and the intervention mediated acute stress of mothers and fathers differently ($p = 0.01$). Parents reported feeling overall satisfied with the STAR program and they felt less stressed in the hospital and more connected to their infants.

Conclusion: The STAR program provides parents a unique opportunity to interact with their infant in a positive meaningful manner and may reduce acute stress in parents during their infants NICU stay.

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Instructions

1. Program is suitable for infants born < 34 weeks admitted to the NICU.
2. Program is 10 minutes in duration.
3. Administer program once a day for three days over the course of a 7-day period.
4. Conduct program 10 minutes before or after clustered-care.
5. Infant remains in the open crib/incubator throughout the intervention.
6. Parent speaks continuously to the infant in their native language while avoiding physical contact and maintaining eye contact throughout the 10-minute period.
7. Infant should be in quiet alert.

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Story Prompts

Below are some story prompts to help guide your stories:

- How you met your partner
- Your last family holiday
- Your favourite family tradition
- Their aunts and uncles (your siblings)
- Your favourite childhood hobby
- Your most memorable childhood birthday
- A funny friend/sibling story