

Holding a Baby

The purpose of this exercise is to familiarize yourself with the body-feel of compassion. This is something that you will be doing in Companioned Prayer when you let yourself feel the gentle love and acceptance of Jesus. This exercise is guided imagery; it is not Companioned Prayer. I'm going to begin by describing a situation where a newborn baby at the hospital needs to be held, and then I'll ask you to imagine yourself getting a call and going to the hospital, and noticing what it feels like to hold the baby; and then we will continue in that way.

1. To help you visualize this I would like to share this picture of a volunteer at a hospital's neonatal intensive care unit, doing just this. *[Share the picture on the next page]*
2. Now as we begin, just sit comfortably and close your eyes. Perhaps notice your breathing for a few moments. *[pause]*
3. Imagine yourself sitting at home. You receive a phone call from a nurse at the nearby hospital. They have a brand-new newborn in their ICU that is in a very fragile state. The nurse says they are worried that the baby might not make it; but they know that if the baby could feel what it is like to be held and loved, then the baby might be okay. She goes on to say that all of the nurses are very busy, and she is asking if you would come to the hospital and simply hold the baby for a while so that it can feel loved. *[pause]*
4. You have arrived at the hospital and are settled down, sitting in a rocking chair. The nurse gives you the precious baby to hold, and you hold it in your arms up against your body. You are holding it with tenderness and faith, giving it your love. *[pause]*
5. Notice how it feels in your body to be holding this baby, in this gentle, caring, faith-filled way. Just stay with this a while and allow your awareness to seep into your body, to settle in, and sense how all this feels inside. *[pause]*
6. Notice how you and the baby feel like one; how your love and care for it, and its response to you, feel like you are one in this sense of holding and being held, one in caring and loving. Let go into all of this, and just be there for a while. *[pause]*
7. Staying with how all this feels inside, notice how all this feels as you become aware of Jesus holding you and the baby, tenderly in his loving arms. *[pause]* Let go into how all this feels inside, being held in his gentle love, and how you feel in your body. *[pause]*
8. As we bring this experience to a close, perhaps stretch, take a few moments, and then open your eyes when you are ready. *[pause]*

Would anyone like to share what you experienced, or what that felt like? Could you notice the body-feel of tenderness and compassion? How did it change as the story progressed? Was it easy?

I CARE

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UC Davis neonatal ICU is his pride & joy

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The hypnotic sway of a rocking chair, the quiet voice of a familiar visitor. The tiny fingers of an infant grasp the solid thumb of a man who cares deeply for her. Unaware of the tubes coming from her body and draped across the lap of her human cradle, Fatima Ortiz-Cervantes slips gracefully into a slumber highlighted by rhythmic pats on her back and tender strokes across her cheeks.

Jim Donoghue, 64, who never had children of his own, will stay for hours if she needs him to. Every baby needs to be held — especially the ones spending their first fragile days in the UC Davis Children's Hospital Neonatal Intensive Care Unit, where he volunteers.

"They need somebody to take care of them and watch out for them," he said.

His love will be felt after he's gone: He has willed all his earthly possessions to the care unit.