

Dear Caregiver (mommy, daddy, nurse, therapist, or whoever is touching me),

My job here in the NICU is to grow stronger so I can go home but sometimes that job is so hard for me that I get really stressed out!! Even though I can't talk yet, there are many ways I can communicate with you and show you how I am feeling. The monitor that shows you my heart rate, oxygen level, and respirations is only one way to see how I am feeling and sometimes that thing beeps for no reason at all!! So, here are my other very important ways of showing you that I need time to reorganize myself. In other words—relax, regroup, and unwind! These cues are called **AVOIDANCE SIGNALS**. My therapist will mark the ones I tend to use the most.

Skin color changes in my face _____	Gagging _____
Arching or extending my neck _____	Hiccups _____
Outstretched hand/Stop sign _____	Crying _____
Closing my eyes _____	Looking away _____
Change in muscle tone _____	Finger splaying _____

When I show you any of these signals, there are many ways you can help me cope and reorganize myself. These are called **COPING SKILLS**.

Containment or firm hands _____	Sucking _____
Tucking position/flexion of body _____	Holding onto a finger _____
My hands to my head _____	Leg/foot bracing _____
My hands to my mouth _____	Grasping _____

Please pay attention too my communication with you. It will help me grow stronger faster and help me deal with everything that has to be done to make me healthy.

LOVE ME