**Dear** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

I am going through a really challenging and scary time. Spending time in hospital can be stressful and isolating. Here are some ways you could help:

* Come visit me at the hospital because it is difficult for me to leave my baby for long. I might not have the energy or time to have company at home.
* Treat me to a coffee or a meal – even better if it is homemade or bought from outside the hospital.
* Be flexible and understanding; things can change quickly in the NICU and I may be suddenly unavailable because my baby is having a bad day or I am having a hard time coping that day.
* Understand that you are not likely going to be able to see the baby; most NICU’s have strict policies about who can visit.
* Do not visit me if you have any symptoms of illness or if you have been looking after anyone who is ill. I cannot get sick. Babies on the NICU are very fragile and cannot be exposed to germs.
* Make food for me that can be frozen and eaten later. If I’m not home, you could give it to another close friend or family member who can get it to me.
* Find out what restaurant chains are in the hospital where my baby is staying or close to the hospital, and buy me a gift card for that restaurant.
* Offer to take care of some of the everyday things in my life I may not have time for while in hospital such as house cleaning, laundry, feeding or walking the dog, looking after or entertaining other children.
* Offer me a listening ear or shoulder to cry on. You don’t have to know the perfect response, just show me that you care. Ask how I’m doing. This roller coaster of emotions is really tough.
* Ask how my baby is doing that day; things can change moment-to- moment and certainly day-to- day for babies on the NICU, so asking how my baby is doing in general may be too big of a question for me to answer.
* Don’t take it personally if I don’t want to talk or don’t have time to chat. I appreciate that you care.
* Ask to see pictures of my baby and show an interest in my baby beyond his/her medical condition. Having a baby is exciting and parents in the NICU have little opportunity to show off their new bundle.
* Look up some images of NICU babies online beforehand so you know what to expect.
* Understand that I may not be able to be there for you while my baby is in the NICU. Once things settle down for my baby, I want to hear more about your life and be there to support you again.
* Most importantly, BE THERE for ME. You don’t have to have the perfect thing to say, and you don’t have to do anything necessarily.
* Check in with me and let me know you are thinking of me and that you care.
* I apologize if I forget to thank you or respond back to you.

Thank you from the bottom of my heart. You are a life preserver along my unique journey.