



Mission Statement

FEEL supports families through the unique and devastating grief process that occurs after the death of a family member with a disability; the depth of the grief they feel is a reflection of the exceptional love, joy and commitment they experienced during their lives.

FEEL seeks to ensure that all bereaved survivors of people with disabilities never stand alone or feel isolated. To that end, FEEL offers support, knowledge and understanding.



More Info?

Would you like to connect with another family?

Please contact us:

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Remembering...

Nathaniel Brandon Mitchell Davison
August 23, 1996 – January 16, 2011

Twyla May Dyck
March 17, 2000 – June 11, 2011

David Christopher Gaebel
October 25, 1981 – October 6, 2010

Fall, 2011

Piper Lynn Imrie
August 12, 1999 – December 16, 2009

Bryan John Janzen
August 9, 1988 – July 13, 2002

Kathy Barbara Janzen
May 14, 1953 – December 23, 2010

David Matthew Johnston
January 28, 1992 – August 2, 2005

Keenan William Philip Klisowsky
September 5, 1990 – June 22, 2002

Seth Larry Koester
February 8, 2002 – August 25, 2005

Kimberley Dawn Leir
February 8, 1979 – May 18, 1985

Cash Jesse James Morin
December 2, 2004 – February 18, 2009

Skyla Ann Penstock
July 10, 2001 – June 13, 2005

David Matthew Joseph Petroschuk
February 5, 1989 – October 31, 1989

Diane Lillie Poff
March 28, 1954 – August 17, 2005

Rachel Lilli Schorr
January 24, 1987 – March 23, 2004

Tori Lorraine Slade
July 19, 2003 – July 2, 2008

Alyssa Lynn Wilks
January 7, 2004 – July 27, 2009

Cody Robert Wilks
June 23, 2001 – May 6, 2002

Rachelle Elizabeth Wilson
August 30, 1998 – April 3, 2003

Adam Barrett Yoner
March 14, 1986 – January 2, 2011

If you would like your family member's name to appear in this section of the next newsletter, please contact us.

To the Editor:

(In response to the last FEEL newsletter)

Wow - very powerful. I think I need to give Travis an extra hug tonight. May the members of FEEL find strength, support and peace in yet another group they didn't sign up for. Thanks for sharing.

Janice Rutherford

After My Family Member Died This Was Helpful

- ♥ People saying, "I was thinking about you"
- ♥ Acknowledging anniversaries and birthdays
- ♥ Saying, "I was thinking about *David*"
- ♥ Acts of service – cooking a meal, helping with the kids, back rubs, lunch...
- ♥ When someone asks what they can do for you, be honest. Tell them what you do need – a bathroom cleaned, a meal made, going out for lunch...
- ♥ Sending me an e-mail
- ♥ Telling me and others what my child meant to you and the world
- ♥ Making a donation in my child's name
- ♥ Maintaining support not only straight away but also two, three years after...

This Was Absolutely NOT Helpful

- In moments of grief, having someone not close to me trying to comfort me
- People saying, "How are you doing?" when it feels 'false'
- People saying, "It was a blessing – no more suffering"
- People saying, "Life goes on"
- Expecting you to do too much
- Realize that I will never be 'over it' so do not say, "You'll get over it"

(Adapted from FEEL Grief Workshop)

The shifts of fortune test the reliability of friends.

Cicero

Every disabled person...

- ☺ Has twice the perseverance of an Olympic champion
- ☺ Shows ten times the inner strength
- ☺ Suffers one hundred more disappointments
- ☺ Bounces back from a thousand more defeats
- ☺ Works three times harder

And has none of the glory.

Written by my sister

(January 25, 1977 – January 19, 2010)

And re-written by Me

Cause some days still now I am very disabled too without you.



Cherished Memories

As I think of the two of you I remember the good times we shared.

Cody, even though we had such a short time together, you were the bright light that shone inside me. I will always miss your tightly gripped hand around my finger. You filled my heart with peace and love. I will miss you forever, Cody.

My dearest Alyssa, when I think of you, as I often do, you were so precious to me. You persevered. We were so strong together and you never gave up. You fought so hard and we fought together as long as we could. I guess it wasn't meant to be. I have to let you go again my precious Alyssa, my dearest daughter whom I will always cherish.

Love always

Mommy

Do you like to connect with others using Facebook? Please check out "Families Experiencing Exceptional Loss" or the profile page for Michele Rowe.

Notice to the World: Today is Grief Day

My daughter, Rachel, died on March 23, 2004, suddenly, without warning or so much as a by your leave. She never was one to ask permission to do anything. When Rae wanted to go, she left and if she wanted to enter, she was coming through. A locomotive had nothing on her.

Since then, I have tried, alternately, to not drive into a train, survive, live, thrive, remember, forget, grieve, keep busy, sleep, work harder, go away, and stay home. The strategy depends on the day, and what happens or doesn't happen in it. But there are days when there is no strategy, no choice or action or attitude that will make me feel better or stop the pain. I call these "Grief Days" and this is my memo to the world about what they are and what they mean. It is, as yet, unmarked, unrecognized and unacknowledged by most of the world. If you have ever said, "Let me know if you need anything" and meant it, here's your chance to share Grief Day with me.

When I am having a "Grief Day", it means:

- ✘ I will not be coming into work or will be leaving early because work is meaningless today, as is everything because Rachel died
- ✘ I may not be able to empathize with your frustrations over your child's messy room or poor hygiene because I would give anything to wash her dirty laundry
- ✘ I cannot be a good friend and listen to your problems with the mother-in-law, boyfriend, employer or Revenue Canada because I have nothing to give you today; I am empty
- ✘ I cannot clean my house, or cook supper or bake muffins for the school party because on Grief Days my body doesn't work properly. I am tired as in an elephant and two semi-trailers and a grand piano are tied to my ass and I

- cannot move because that is how much grief weighs
- ✘ I hate everyone who believes that God decides who lives or dies, that angels saved their child and not mine, or that there is a purpose for all this
 - ✘ I don't want to be alone, but I am spectacularly alone – even other parents who have had a child die didn't lose Rachel
 - ✘ I am filled with resentment at all those people who brought casseroles and cards and said they'd never forget her or us and they forgot us or reduced us to a passing thought or two
 - ✘ I would love to have someone do or say something to show that they want to understand how I can live through this and not go crazy or die
 - ✘ Yes, I want a damn medal, I deserve that and more because Rachel died and I didn't plan a suicide or a murder, get drunk or have an affair or burn down the house she died in or abandon my other children. I paid my taxes and went to work and cleaned my house and cooked good food, all heroic acts when your child has died, performed by someone who never wanted to be a hero
 - ✘ I have not become a better person, or found meaning in my loss or fully accepted that she is gone and I likely never will. I don't want to grow as a person; I want my daughter back
 - ✘ I will never again believe in a world where good things happen to good people and the person you kiss goodbye this morning will come back to you later, or that you have time to do that thing you want to do

Today is a Grief Day. Today, I felt all of those things described above and more. I do not know when the next one will come. There is no discernible pattern. It does not change with the moon or Pacific tides or my moods. It just arrives, unannounced, and I am learning to live with it. It does not get easier with practice or frequency. It is always just as hard as it was before. The only difference is that now I have a name for it.

I am sending you this memo so that you recognize and acknowledge when Grief Day arrives and when it is over (for now). I want you

to understand that I can't always do those things that I have committed to do, if Grief Day arrives. I may be short-tempered or depressed or angry at the world. There is no other reason for this, except that Rachel died and that is enough.

Thank you for sharing Grief Day with me. I hope that if you ever experience your own Grief Day, I can share it with you.

Michele Rowe
(September 15, 2005)

"Wounds do not heal without time and attention. Yet, too many of us feel that we don't have the right to take the time to heal from emotional and physical wounds."

Judy Tatelbaum
(From the book *Courage to Grieve*)

Mark your Calendar

We are planning our next annual grief workshop for the weekend of January 20 – 22, 2012 in Regina. If you or someone you know might be interested in attending, please contact Shirley McGuire (contact info on front page) for more details.



FEEL families are planning to write a book about their unique experiences. If you would like to share your story, please contact Shirley McGuire. We would love to hear from you.

A Parent's Grief

How do you write an article about grief? I can write I am sad, hurt, but these are only words with a definition; no one can understand the feelings of sad or hurt because they are truly individual words.

It is now a year since my son Keenan passed away. Honestly, it does not seem like a year,

maybe only three months of respite, and he will be home again soon. It is only a dream and then equally crushing when reality wakes you up. I do not know if I can tell you if it is easier a year later – I think it might be in physical ways; i.e. lifting, but the ache in my heart isn't better. At times, there are short breaks from the aching but when it returns the intensity is the same or stronger.

... Now that the year is up we have experienced all our firsts. Every one is ugly. For those going through their first year I apologize in advance; things are hard. Tomorrow is not always better – sometimes it's worse two hours from now. I do not really have any advice because each family is different. For me, having two younger children – Aaleah, seven years old, and Ryder, six – have pulled me through. Involving them in different activities throughout the year literally forced me to get dressed and leave the house. I know for a fact I would have never left the house, I would have had my groceries delivered.

... You know, after a while people are uncomfortable being around you because you always look sad or you cry at least once at every social event you attend. Grieving is a very lonely emotion. So lonely that even as a husband and wife you grieve differently and sometimes, because of that, both of you feel and see things in ways that pull you apart. Many times hurtful words are said, not meant but said, because it's one way to deal with emotions. It may be you just don't bother to talk and that itself builds tension. The stats indicate one out of two marriages with a child who has a severe disability will end in breaking up the family. Now divide that by half again and those are the stats for a marriage when that child with a severe disability dies. We made it one year, I'm hoping for two.

... They tell me as the years go by the intensity of the waves of grief weaken and the time between waves expands. But today I am riding a torrential wave of grief in the forthcoming first anniversary of my son Keenan.

Deborah Klisowsky

(Excerpt from an article printed in the Saskatchewan Family Network newsletter, summer, 2003.)

This newsletter has been made possible through funding by the Saskatchewan Association for Community Living. Please share it with other families, friends and colleagues. If you do not receive it directly and wish to be on the mailing list, please let us know!

