



Speaking from Experience Arthritis in Childhood

Transcript for chapter 6 of 9: Family and friends

David and Michelle have a daughter, 5 years, with arthritis: Michelle is with her all day because she's not working, so it's good for her to get away from it when I come home. I can play with her and she can get attached to me. I can see what's happening and understand what's going on.

Peter and Toni have a daughter, 14 years, with arthritis: Whenever we're together we're talking about the girls, where we have to go. And then you think, hang on, we haven't actually spoken about us for a long time or had time together.

David and Michelle: You really need the support of each other to be able to cope. And so that you're providing a stable relationship for them to.

Conrad and Doune have a daughter, 7 years, with arthritis: The impact on our four year-old son is that I think he is just beginning to realise how unwell Claire has been at times. He doesn't talk about it much. At times I felt very guilty that he's missed out on a lot of time. He has just very obligingly come along to all of these hospital appointments.

Peter and Toni: Lee has had it hard, I think, with having a sister who is sick all the time. She has to witness that and she knows that she can't do anything to help her.

David and Michelle: We're fairly lucky that Sophie's brothers and sisters are younger than her. So the extra attention we give Sophie doesn't seem to affect them much because when I'm exercising Sophie, Cecily the middle one, joins in and she becomes a part of it. But I'd say, when they get older we'll have to be careful that it's not all thrown to Sophie because she has arthritis.

Peter and Toni: They do argue of course, as any siblings or children do. But they're very close. If one isn't home, the other one seems a little bit lost.

Conrad and Doune: Occasionally when he's got a little stomach ache or something like that, he'll say to me, like last week, "Mum, I've got arthritis in my stomach", because he has picked up that Claire has had an arthritic condition in her ribs.

Peter and Toni: At school her close friends know and she doesn't want to discuss with everybody else. So we have to remember what she wants also.

Robert, 18 years, has Polyarticular Arthritis: During high school, I found that it has turned a few friends away, which really disappoints me, to know that kids will react like that. But most are really quite sympathetic towards you and try to help out the most they can.

Peter and Toni: We've had a lot of support from family and friends, but at the same time they didn't realise the pain that we were going through. They saw Melanie as being sick, but it was also a huge impact for Peter and I to come to terms with.



Jennifer, 19 years, has Fibromyalgia (FMS): The best friends I have are the ones that can put their hand on my shoulder and just be there, and know that I'm sore. And love me regardless and help me to get through whatever I have to without making a big fuss. And that means more to me than any other friend at the moment. It's those friends that have become closer and closer; the other ones have faded away.