

First United Methodist Church

Kyrie and Brielle Jackson were born on 17 October 1995 at the Massachusetts Memorial Hospital in Worcester, MA., 12 weeks ahead of their due date. Each of the twins weighed all of two pounds at birth. Though Kyrie was putting on a bit of weight in the days following her arrival, Brielle was not doing as well. The oxygen level in her blood was low, and her weight gain was slow. She cried a great deal, leaving her gasping and blue-faced.

On November 12, Brielle went into critical condition. She began gasping for breath, and her face and stick-thin arms and legs turned bluish-gray. Her heart rate was way up, and she got hiccups, a dangerous sign that her body was under stress. Her parents watched, terrified that she might die.

Nurse Gayle Kasparian tried everything she could think of to stabilize Brielle. She suctioned her breathing passages and turned up the oxygen flow to the incubator. Still Brielle squirmed and fussed as her oxygen intake plummeted and her heart rate soared.

Then Kasparian remembered something she had heard from a colleague. It was a procedure, common in parts of Europe but almost unheard of in this country, that called for double-bedding multiple-birth babies, especially preemies. Getting the parents' permission, Kasparian slipped the squirming baby into the incubator holding the sister she hadn't seen since birth.

When she put Brielle in the incubator with her sister Kyrie, almost immediately Brielle snuggled up to Kyrie. Her blood-oxygen saturation levels, which had been frighteningly low, soared. She began to breathe more easily. The frantic crying stopped and her normal pinkish color quickly returned. As she dozed, Kyrie wrapped her tiny arm around her smaller sibling in a rescuing hug. A picture was taken.

Over the next weeks, her health improved steadily in her new, less lonely quarters. When last heard from, Brielle and Kyrie were healthy preschoolers. The media attention brought about by their story and the now-famous photo caused their parents, Heidi and Paul Jackson of Westminster, to change their telephone number. Are you touched by this story? If you say yes, it can mean that you are emotionally affected. In another context, if you are touched it could mean you are a little crazy. Touched, it's a great word that can mean many things!

When we touch up something we remove blemishes. A touch down means we score. Being touched in the head can mean something is not right mentally. Being touched in the heart means that you were affected deeply. Saying, "He touched me!" can mean excitement if it's someone you like, but it can be an expression seeking punishment if it happens to be your brother after your parents told you both to behave and keep your hands to yourself.

Touching can mean a warm embrace between friends or significant others, a firm handshake in greeting, or a pat on the back. It can also mean inappropriate groping, a shove away, or a slap in the face (physically or emotionally).

The truth is, all of us need to be appropriately touched. Appropriate touches release something in the brain called endorphins. Endorphins generally give a general boost in the mood and happiness of an individual, and are at the root of what athletes call the "Runners High". People need touch in order to survive, or they become "touched", as in not right mentally.

Consider the truth of how important touch can be in our lives. The failing twin was healed by the embrace of her sister. We, too, can bring healing through our embraces and touches. Think how much brighter our day becomes when we are touched in a special way by a special person (or animal!).

One study I read said that we need the equivalent of 12 good hugs or positive affirmations a day in order to survive, and 17 or more in order to thrive.

In the name of God, for the glory of God, let us go out and help people thrive!



This is a picture from an article called "The Rescuing Hug." Kyrie Jackson is on the right, and Brielle is on the left. Each were in their respective incubators, and one was not expected to live. A hospital nurse fought against hospital rules and placed the babies in one incubator. When they were placed together the healthier of the two threw an arm over her sister in an endearing embrace. The smaller baby's heart rate stabilized and her temperature rose to normal.

Photographed in Worcester, Mass.
by Chris Christo/Worcester Telegram & Gazette