

Balloons

Supporting bereaved children and young people in Exeter, East and Mid Devon



20 years of making a difference

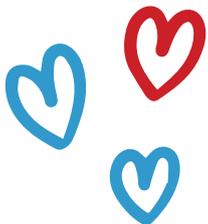
Trudi's story...



“Balloons helped my girls so much in their hour of need and now, 20 years on...I am so proud to be a part of their tapestry.”

When I first joined Balloons as a Grief Support Worker in 2022 I knew I was joining a small but mighty team of dedicated people who were committed to supporting children and young people cope with the multi faceted feelings and emotions of bereavement. What I didn't realise was the impact being a part of this charity would have on me and my children

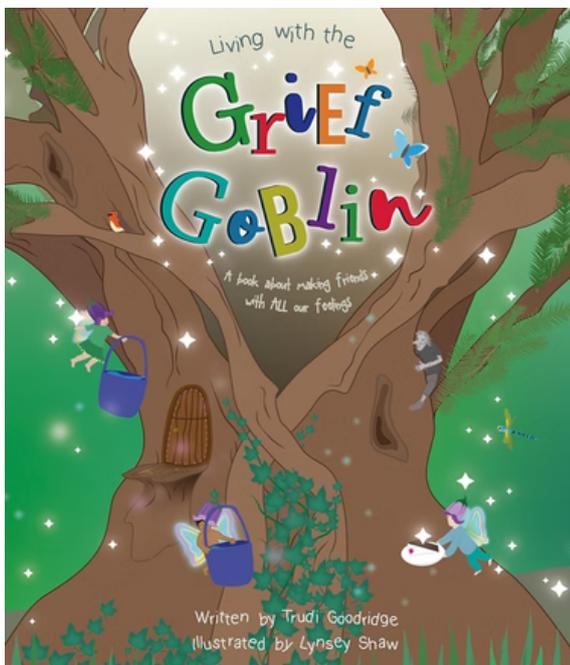
When my husband died from motor neurone disease in 2011, my two young daughters and I were left feeling devastated and rudderless. There was less known and certainly less media coverage about the illness in those days and we were all feeling very isolated. I stumbled across Balloons in a quest to get support for the girls and they went on to receive help and support on a couple of occasions over the next few years.



I was so grateful for the lifeline Balloons provided at that time, so when the time came for the girls to fly the nest to university I decided to train as a grief support worker so I could help other children struggling with the complexities of grief.

During my work I was surprised how relatively few books were readily available that talked openly to young children about expressing their grief. I also came to understand how hard many teachers and carers found it to support bereaved children in their care. This prompted me to write a book - The Grief Goblin.

I remembered when my girls were little I would make up bedtime stories about a little goblin they named Griefy who was angry, cross and gnarly but also mostly misunderstood. In the stories he lived in a giant yew tree with a bunch of sweet fairies that were named after the array of emotions we all have. The fairies were easy to be around but Griefy was hard. However, Griefy could do a job that none of the fairies could do. He could carry and empty the buckets of tears filled by the children and this is why the 'feeling fairies' loved him.



So, Griefy was invited in to the fairy's safe home in the tree and was allowed to sit a while, drink tea and eat cake. He would then be asked to leave, knowing he had permission to return when the buckets were full. This way the children learnt not to be afraid of grief, but to allow it in at times to express itself knowing it was just one of many emotions necessary to live a full life. It was a great way to show the children how to manage and process the very natural emotions that grief brings.

I crowd funded for the publishing of the book and had overwhelming support from my family and friends. This enabled me to distribute it free of charge to every primary school in Devon as well as every children's bereavement charity in the UK and many hospice and healthcare providers across the country.

I still get emails with heartwarming stories of how the book has helped both children and teachers/carers to open discussions around grief and support children during difficult days.



So many school's in rural areas are limited in their resources, so my next project is to find a sponsor to enable me to distribute a copy free of charge to every primary school in Cornwall, and beyond.

Balloons helped my girls so much in their hour of need and now 20 years on, having refined and developed its service, it now supports over 150 children and young people a year and I am so proud to be a part of their tapestry.

Please remember that we are here for you or someone you know who needs support. Also, if you would like a free copy of the Grief Goblin, get in touch on support@balloonscharity.co.uk

Balloons (Devon) | Registered Charity Number: 1158666