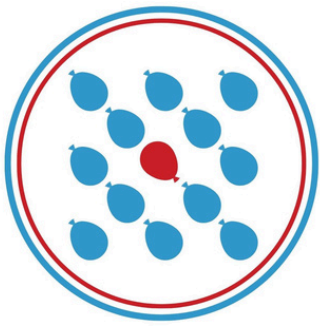




Balloons

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



20 years of making a difference Rob and Jasper's story...



"I feel like I've come full circle – supporting Balloons with family events back in the early days, doing shows for bereaved families as an entertainer... to now needing support for my own family."

Rob and his son Jasper, aged 10, shared with us their experience, following the death of Jasper's brother Tobias. Tobias sadly died at Great Ormond Street Hospital after a four month stay due to a complex Lymphatic anomaly.

Rob is a well known and loved family entertainer in Devon and has a special connection with Balloons. In our early days, Rob would come along to our family days to do entertainment for bereaved children and their families.

He shared a couple of moments from those days which stood out to him:



"I remember at one of the days, looking across at a Mum with her two boys, she was standing strong and the boys were in bits as they took part in a memorial activity. Two years later I went to the same day again, the family were there, but this time I noticed it was the other way around – the boys were there, being strong for their Mum. It made me reflect on how things move on and grief changes."

"Another time at a Balloons family day, there was a memorial activity, and everyone was encouraged to write messages for their loved one. It wasn't that long since my own Mum had died so I felt a personal connection to the day. Whilst writing messages, a boy came over to me and asked who I was writing a message for, I told him I was writing it for my Mum, and he told me he was writing his for his Dad. When the moment came when we all came together to let go of our messages, he looked at me and there was a real moment of understanding and connection which was so powerful."

'After Tobias died, one of the toughest calls in the early days was when I called Balloons. I never imagined the full circle I'd come - supporting Balloons with family events back in the early days, doing shows for bereaved families, to now needing support for my own family. It was helpful to talk to someone right at the beginning, and we received a care package for Jasper. We were then offered one-to-one sessions. Jasper wasn't sure at first if he wanted the support, but we suggested giving it a go. He did and found he looked forward to them and enjoyed the sessions.'

Jasper says about his sessions with his Grief Support Worker at Balloons:

"We would start our sessions doing a blob tree to see how I felt. We did different activities such as playing games, using playdoh and doing orb beads, and searching for marbles, which felt nice. We made a memory box and I wrote Tobias on it and coloured it Orange as this was his favourite colour.



We also made a memory salt jar - using different colours for different memories, I chose White for snow days, Orange for nerf battles, Blue for when we were out on the boat and Purple for messy play! I put the salt jar in my memory box, along with special photographs, a dog pin - he loved Dachshunds and a key ring. We talked about feelings and also stories - I remember one called 'When Dinosaurs Die', which was good."

"In the early days, Jasper wouldn't really talk about memories, he would be quite quick to say he didn't remember things, but after a couple of weeks with his worker at Balloons, he was coming to me, asking if I remembered things - it was so lovely! For me, that was huge and came out of his journey with Balloons. I feel it has given him foundations to build on in talking about his grief."

Rob recently told his moving story on the Jeremy Vine show. You can listen to it on Rob's Facebook page here <https://www.facebook.com/EntertaininglyDifferent>, we'd really recommend a listen.

Please remember that we are here for you or someone you know who needs support.

Get in touch on support@balloonscharity.co.uk

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