

Your Questions

At Meerkat Central we get asked all sorts of questions from children. Here are the answers to some of them:

Q Is it okay to feel happy sometimes when someone is poorly or has died?

A It's a normal and common reaction to sometimes feel happy and do fun things whilst still feeling sad at other times.

Q How can I still remember someone special to me after they have died?

A You can share your memories with your family and friends, or you could create a memory box that you can put things in that remind you of your special person. You can also visit places that you went to with them, or listen to their favourite music.

Q What do I say if someone asks me about my special person who has died?

A It's normal to feel awkward or upset when someone asks you about your special person who has died. It's okay to say you don't want to talk about it. Most children feel that it gets easier to talk about the more they do it. So if you feel able to talk about it, that's okay too.

Q How can I cope with important days without my special person, such as birthdays and Christmas?

A It's normal to worry about how you may feel but everyone feels differently. You could do something to remember them such as buy some flowers, visit a special place, make a card, or talk with others to share memories of your special person.

Spot the Difference

A shelf full of Meerkats, but can you spot the differences?
There are 10 to find!



We'd love to hear your thoughts on Meerkat Mail!

Email us at:
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Issue 15

Welcome to....

The first Meerkat Mail of the year 2020! And what a wet and windy start to the year we have had. We are all hoping for some lovely sunshine to help the spring flowers bloom!

Our Meerkat Christmas Party brings a brilliant end to our year at Meerkat Central and this one didn't disappoint! We had our resident DJ Pete who performed his musical magic and got everyone dancing and playing party games, we had the very hectic but fun photo booth and Ashleigh our amazing face painter. Have a look at the photos and see if you can spot yourself!

Inside, one of our Meerkat Gang, Darcey tells her story of the very special relationship she shared with her Nanna. She writes about how she has learnt to manage her loss with the help of her new friends she has made by being part of the Meerkat Gang.

We have a new admin lady in the Meerkat team. Her name is Sharron and she helps to keep the team running smoothly by answering the phone, making appointments and getting things ready so that we can have our parties, groups and teenage activities so she is a very important lady! Rowan decided to find out some more about Sharron so that you would know who she is. You can read all about her and see her picture inside.

On the back page we have some questions that might help you with some of the things you may be thinking about but didn't want to ask! There is also a 'Spot the Difference' photo of our famous Meerkats shelf that will get you guessing.

*Happy reading
Meerkat Team x*



Darcey's Story

Rowans Meerkat Service is an amazing place for people who have lost somebody from their family. I heard about Rowans Hospice when my Nanna died. She lived with us for 4 years and was home with us when she died in peace.

It made me happy when I made friends with Milli, Riley, and Oliver. When we finished our last meeting we so wanted to see each other again so we met up at Flip Out with our Mum's it was brilliant. We are going to meet up again.

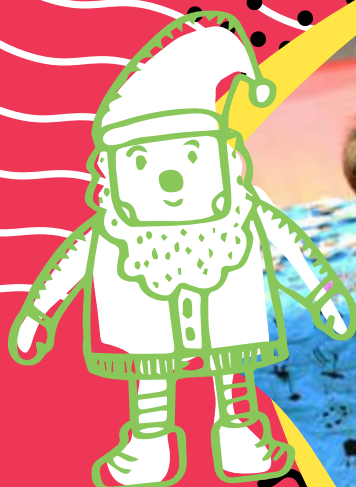
The best memory of my Nanna was she always laughed even if she didn't feel well. She would do 🤔 when she felt like this 😞😞

The best bits of my time at Rowans Meerkats was being with my friends and the AWESOME parties or should I say PAWSome parties especially at Christmas when Riley won the BIGGEST dog teddy in the world!

I liked going into the Meerkat HQ. It was a bit scary but when I went in everyone was very welcoming and it's a crafters dream. We made badges with our names on with stickers and glitter pens.

Thank you so very much for all you did for me and my friends Debs, Helen, Kate and all at Rowans Meerkats.

Love & hugs
Darcey



Starlit Walk Update

In October, our annual Starlit Walk took place around Portsmouth Historic Dockyard. Some of you might have taken part, dressing up in your silver and sparkly best to celebrate the 10th Birthday of our Starlit Walk.

500 awesome children and young people took part. They chose to walk either the 1.5 mile or 3-mile course which took them past HMS Victory and through the areas of the Naval Base that are normally off limits to the public. A Zumba warm up, live music from the Big Noise Samba Band and Portsmouth City Band helped to bring the dockyard to life and created a wonderful atmosphere. Between them the walkers raised an incredible **£24,583!** Thank you to everyone who took part, and for all of you who have done your own fundraising to help raise money for Rowans Hospice. This makes sure that we can still look after people at the Hospice.

If you'd like to take part in this year's Starlit Walk, please let your grown up know that it will take place on **Wednesday 28 October**. Keep an eye on our website at www.rowanshospice.co.uk/events.



Meerkats Christmas Party

DJ Pete did not disappoint the Meerkat children at this year's Christmas party. He had them dancing and even singing! There was a fun 'guess the name of the dog' game and the winner won the biggest, fluffiest dog the children had ever seen! The winning name was Ozzie and was won by Riley, who loved his prize, although his mum was a little shocked when she saw how big Ozzie was! Ashleigh our resident face painter was there turning the children, and some adults, into Christmassy reindeers, snowmen and sparkly fairies and ensuring that the children looked their best when having their photos taken in the photo booth. There were even some princesses there to put the children in the Christmas mood. It was a brilliant end to the Meerkat year where everyone could come together and make so many happy memories.

Rowan Meets:

Sharon O'Connell

Job Title: Meerkat Service Administrator (AKA 'Organiser of Fun')

When did you join the Meerkat Team?

I joined last November (2019), which was great timing as one of my first jobs was to help organise the Christmas parties.

Before that I had actually been working for the Community Nurse Specialist Palliative Care Team in the Hospice for a year and a half. When I saw the advert for the position with the Meerkat Team I loved the sound of it. So much so, I actually told my daughter to go for it. Thankfully she had just had an interview and been successful in getting a job in Rowans IT department. So, I decided to apply for the job myself!

What is the best bit about your job?

I love all of it. Especially seeing the children really happy, having fun and enjoying themselves during the parties or events.

What does your job involve?

I work Monday to Friday, 8.45am to 1.45pm. My role is to support the whole of the Meerkat Team, which involves a lot of sorting and organising! From entering and adding information onto the system to helping to set up and arrange meetings; to receiving, recording and distributing all the incoming post and phone calls. Plus I get to help organise all the parties and events, from sending out the invites to the children to booking the rooms and entertainment, such as chocolate making or laser quest.

What has been your best party?

I went with a group of 28 friends and family for a big birthday celebration in Las Vegas. It was absolutely brilliant. We also got to meet BIG Elvis.

What song will get you up to dance at a party?

I will dance to anything! I especially like Motown music. I haven't had an opportunity to show my moves at any of our Meerkat Parties yet, as I am often busy making sure the party is going to plan.

What is your favourite party food?

Chilli with chips! It's so easy to do and you can just leave it bubbling away while you enjoy the party.