

**COLLAR &
CUFFS CO**



Best Community Project 2016



LITTLE MEERKAT'S BIG PANIC



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BOOKING INFORMATION PACK FOR EARLY YEARS SETTINGS & SCHOOLS

Hello there and thank you for your interest in booking **Little Meerkat's Big Panic**: we're really looking forward to working with you!

In this pack you'll find all the information you need to get the most out of your time with us, plus answers to a lot of questions you may have about the show; if you can't find the answer to something, don't hesitate to get in touch and we will do our best to help.

ABOUT THE BOOK AND AUTHOR

Little Meerkat's Big Panic is by trauma parenting expert, Jane Evans, and is published by Jessica Kingsley. The book is available from Jane's website or via Amazon.

Jane has over twenty years' experience of working with some of the most vulnerable children, young people and families, through a variety of settings. She's a self-taught expert in the neuroscience of anxiety and devised the Meerkat-Elephant-Monkey model for explaining and working with the brain and body not only for her direct work with clients of all ages, but to enhance the training she delivers for professionals. Each animal represents a different area of the brain with their characteristics describing that area's function and interaction, especially when handling intense emotions or experiences.

To make the model more widely known, and to create a resource able to reach very young children, Jane developed a picture storybook that explores the model in action through a simple story about a meerkat who loses and then finds his friends. Along the way he meets up with other parts of his brain – an elephant and a monkey – who help or hinder him as he searches.

For more information about Jane, her services and the other resources she has developed, go to: www.thejaneevans.com

COLLAR & CUFFS CO

Collar & Cuffs Co is a multi award-winning emerging theatre company (founded in 2016) producing multisensory musical work specifically for early years children and those with complex or special needs. Creative Director, Julia, has worked with children and young people with emotional, social, behavioural and learning difficulties for over fifteen years and is a former National Coordinator for the Anti-Bullying Alliance at the National Children's Bureau. Her co-producer is Ellie Collar, an Educational Therapist, consultant and trainer specialising in early development.

BASICS ABOUT THE SHOW

Little Meerkat's Big Panic has been adapted for stage by Julia for Collar & Cuffs Co in partnership with Early Years SEN, with original songs written by Julia and actor/singer/songwriter Niall Walsh. The show features two actors and is a fully self-contained production in that it does not require you to provide anything other than a suitable space for us to perform in.

The show runs for around 20 minutes, followed by a 30 minute sensory play session to support the audience in getting to know their own 'inner meerkats' and to explore what they might like when they feel anxious or overwhelmed.

The show uses unamplified live music, puppets, movement and speaking. It is pitched at the level of CBeebies content – think 'Justin's House', or their pantomimes and Shakespeare adaptations – and is therefore recommended for Under 7s, however you know your children: if you feel it would be suitable for older ones then we are only too happy to welcome them along.

The show has been made possible by kind permission of Jane Evans, and via £450 of funding won by pitching to MK SOUP (April 2016); the funding has covered the costs of the set, props, and the Calm Box. Additional support and donations of materials have come from John Lewis Retail, Early Years SEN, La Terrazza restaurant for free rehearsal space, and The Mountain t-shirt company.

SPACE, SET AND PROPS

Ideally, we need a performance space bigger than 4m x 4m, though we can reduce the 'footprint' of our stage to fit smaller spaces if needed. We are also happy to perform outdoors, weather allowing. The space needs to be as clear of furniture as possible.

Our set comprises of a 3.5m x 3.5m canvas floor covering. Our audience sits round three sides of the floor covering on seating pads made of traditional Katana fabric (African wax print) from Botswana. Once the seating pads are full, the rest of the audience should sit behind on the floor, though benches and chairs can also be used.

We also have a large step ladder, a large drum, and a few small hand props and puppets.

We may use a small fog machine to create scented mist at two points in the show; this will require a power supply, and will only be used where it is safe to do so.

We will need a parking space for a van in your car park to unload our equipment.

ACCESSIBILITY AND MULTI-SENSORY CONTENT

To widen access to very young children, as well as children and young people with a range of sensory impairments, physical and/or learning disabilities, or those with emotional or behavioral difficulties, we have designed the show to be highly multi-sensory, but delivered in a way that is calming and magical. For many children, this may be their first experience of theatre so we want to make sure it's a really special one.

Depending on audience size and needs (see section below), we invite our audiences to get involved by joining in with the songs, and vocalizing thoughts and feelings. We cue up changes of pace, songs, use of the fog machine, etc., really carefully to ensure children are able to anticipate what's coming next.

While our actors are portraying animals, they do not wear animal suits or masks as these can be scary for some children; they wear t-shirts with animal faces on instead.

Our special effects include scented fog to create the smell of 'calm' and 'anxious', puppets that stimulate vision and create air motion, tiny touchable bubbles, and drumming and acapella vocals in harmony to stimulate hearing and create vibrations.

The fabric and materials on the stage have, where possible, been sourced from the Kalahari region of Africa and have been chosen not only for their cultural relevance but for their high colour contrast, sound or feel.

SENSORY PLAY SESSION

The play session is delivered by the actors and provides time for children and grown-ups to process what they have seen, embed the key messages, and to interact with the performers.

The session uses a combination of songs, rhymes, drumming and movement to demonstrate a range of low cost/no cost ways to support calm.

We have put together a wide range of multi-sensory resources tried and test in practice to support children in getting to know what their 'inner meerkats' like to help them feel calm and relaxed. Children will have an opportunity to handle, share, test and talk/vocalise about each resource. We will also help them think of things they already have access to at their setting or at home that could achieve similar effects for them, and to reinforce the calming strategies contained in the performance.

If we are performing to children aged 7 - 12, we are also able to run 'making of' sessions. These may include movement, singing and songwriting, Forum Theatre, puppet-making, etc. Sessions of this kind are particularly suitable if you are intending all

students in a primary school to see a performance; the standard circle-time session may not be developmentally or age-appropriate for older ones, however we can still meet their needs through other creative activities to enhance learning and experience.

We are also happy to adapt our package to meet the needs of young people aged 12+. The session following the production can be oriented towards exploring 'behind the scenes', which may be suitable for young people with an interest in performing arts, or can stay as a circle-time though delivered in a way that is more suited to the age range; we deliver Calm Box sessions for adults on CPD days, so would use a similar methodology with the young people.

AUDIENCE SIZE AND RELAXED PERFORMANCES

When you book us, you can have us for the day! So, to get the best out of your experience there are lots of ways you can run things. Generally, we can perform to however many people you like, but for play sessions we suggest no more than groups of 50.

Performance and circle-time separately

We can do a whole-setting/whole-year group performance, and then deliver as many circle-time sessions as needed afterwards; one performance and approximately 8 circle-time sessions in a typical school day. If required, we can provide a second day to ensure every child in your setting can experience the circle-time, or you can choose to prioritize those children you feel really need some extra input and we'll fit in as many as we can on one day instead.

Performance and circle-time combined

We can combine the performance and circle-time into one session and then run that multiple times for specific classes or groups (approx. 4 combined sessions in a typical school day). Again, we can run on additional days ensure every child in your setting can be involved.

Relaxed performances

We can run a special 'relaxed' performance and circle-time for children who would find concentrating and being in a big group a bit tricky to handle. No audience size is too small! If there is a particular child who would enjoy the experience but would need to access it on their own with 1-2-1 adult support, then that's fine with us!

Performances for PMLD

We can run a performance specifically for children with profound and multiple learning difficulties where we will increase the length of the show to allow each child more time to experience the puppets, smells, and sounds. The subsequent

circle-time will also be run slightly differently to support children in exploring the sensory toys and in expressing preferences.

Performance for or with adults

We are very happy to perform for groups of adults as part of a training day to enable reflection on strategies for helping children cope with big feelings, and we're also very happy to run performances for and with parents/carers supporting their children and experiencing the workshop together.

Our 'relaxed' performances are particularly suitable for children who may find it very difficult to be part of a bigger audience. This might be because they would feel too anxious, be too fidgety, be too noisy, and so on. In a relaxed performance anything goes! As long as children are safe and supported by their trusted grown-ups, we're very happy for them to walk across the stage, touch and talk to the characters during the performance, roll on the floor, watch from the corner of a room or behind a curtain, flap, spin, rock, and be as noisy as they like! As long as they have a positive experience and are not distressed, we will engage with children in any way they need.

Whatever format of performance and circle-time you choose, we expect grown-ups from your setting to be present to support your children, to get involved and role model how to be part of an audience, and to encourage children to participate – it's very difficult for us to behaviour manage our audience and to perform at the same time, so please ensure staff are briefed about the expectations in advance.

TRAINING FOR STAFF, VOLUNTEERS, PARENTS/CARERS

For an additional cost, you can book either Jane herself or Ellie from Early Years SEN to provide training around the neuroscience of anxiety, brain development, and the impact of trauma on children's behavior, emotional health and wellbeing. Training is targeted to specific audiences, so the training for staff will have a different emphasis than the one for parents/carers, for example. Training of this kind can help transform understanding of thoughts, feelings and behaviours not only to more effectively support children, but to help adults become more self-aware in managing their own anxiety, stress, and life events too.

Early Years SEN can also provide consultancy and support in using these approaches in primary education to improve handwriting, reading, eye-tracking, concentration, coordination and attainment.

If you are interested in booking training, then please contact us and we will arrange for Jane or Ellie to get in touch to discuss your particular needs.

COSTS, BOOKING INFORMATION, TERMS AND CONDITIONS

Performances of **Little Meerkat's Big Panic** are not-for-profit and cost **£500** for the day regardless of how many performances we do; the fee we charge provides a basic day's salary for the cast, plus travel expenses for up to 100 miles from Bedfordshire where we're based, and a contribution towards the upkeep of our props, set and special effects. The cost also includes a free digital copy of the all the songs from the show.

If your setting is over 100 miles away, then we will charge 45p per each additional mile; so, if your setting is 150 miles away, we will charge you an additional £45 (50 miles x 2 x 0.45p per mile), etc.

If you require us for a second day, then we will charge you only for our time @ **£360** for the day. So, for one-day within 100 miles of Bedfordshire: **£500**. For two days within 100 miles of Bedfordshire: **£860**

We are very happy for you to share costs with other settings, so you could consider joining up with other local nurseries, preschools, primaries, or your feeder settings. We are able to travel between two sites within 10 miles of each other without any additional cost; distances of greater than 10 miles will be charged at 0.45p per extra mile.

For an additional cost we can also provide you with copies of the **Little Meerkat's Big Panic** book; please discuss this at the time of booking so we can ensure we order them in for you.

We are happy to perform at conferences, festivals, community events, or other settings; we are also available year-round and are not tied to school terms.

A deposit of £150 is required in advance to secure your preferred date(s). Once booked, if you cancel up to six weeks before the performance date then your deposit will be returned in full. If you cancel between five weeks and one week before the performance, then your deposit will be retained in full and no refund made. If you cancel within seven days of the performance, then the full fee will be due. No refunds can be made on any books you have ordered.

In the unlikely event that we have to cancel for any reason then every effort will be made to reschedule your booking or, alternatively, a full refund of your deposit will be made.

To discuss a booking or for any other questions, please email Julia at info@juliacollar.com or call 01525 796 216 / 07826 855 982
www.collarandcuffs.org



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