

**National  
Theatre**

**GREENE**

**IN THE  
WORDS OF  
SURVIVORS**

**Self-Care Guide**

# What is *Grenfell: in the words of survivors*?

*Grenfell: in the words of survivors* is a powerful new verbatim play from the testimony of residents at the heart of the Grenfell Tower tragedy.

Six years on, interviews conducted with a group of survivors and bereaved reveal the impact of the multiple failures that led to a national disaster.

Startling and deeply moving, it explores the courage and resilience of an ill-treated community and their continued campaign for justice.

Recommended for ages 14+

## About this guide

Thank you to [Clean Break](#) for bringing their care practices, including this Self-Care Guide, to the National Theatre during our co-production of *Dixon and Daughters* (2023). Clean Break is a theatre company working with women with lived experience of the criminal justice system or at risk of entering it.

This guide also takes inspiration from the work of [20 Stories High](#) and [The Survivors Trust](#).

## Why self-care?

If you feel that you are likely to be activated by *Grenfell: in the words of survivors*, this guide may help you look after yourself whilst you are at the National Theatre.

This guide includes:

- 1) An introduction to 'self-care'
- 2) Further reading and resources about self-care
- 3) Self-care suggestions
- 4) Self-care advice for before/during/after watching *Grenfell: in the words of survivors*
- 5) Self-care resources available at the National Theatre
- 6) Synopsis and content warnings for the production
- 7) Additional resources

## What does 'self-care' mean?

*'The concept of self-care comes from the Black Feminist movement. Self-care is a choice to listen to our needs and look after ourselves, so we are able to keep going and live our best lives, despite the difficulties we experience in life and how they make us feel.'* – Clean Break

*‘Caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation, and that is an act of political warfare.’ - Audre Lorde, a Black feminist and pioneer of self-care.*

## **Self-care suggestions**

**Here are some suggestions of self-care that you can do independently. You may prefer to do these before watching the play if you think you are going to find the content challenging, or after watching it.**

### **Breathe**

Breathing is a great way to help you feel calm. Try breathing in for four seconds, holding your breath for four seconds, exhaling for four seconds and holding again. Repeat this for as long as you need.

### **Try a grounding exercise**

Grounding exercises are things you can do to bring yourself into contact with the present moment to relieve distress. There are many ways you can do this:

Working backwards, use your five senses to bring yourself calmly back into the room and your body. List things you notice around you. For example:

- Five things you see
- Four things you hear
- Three things you can touch
- Two things you can smell
- One thing you can taste

### **Talk to someone**

If you find the content of *Grenfell: in the words of survivors* distressing, do consider contacting one of the organisations we’ve listed in this self-care guide, if you’ve not done so already.

## **Before watching *Grenfell: in the words of survivors***

### **Read**

Research the production first and think about potential areas that might be challenging for you. Below are content/trigger warnings that you may find helpful.

### **Prepare**

Arrange to go with someone you trust and feel comfortable with. Talk to them about any concerns you have about difficult content and come up with some ideas

together about what to do if you feel activated. For example, stepping outside, physical contact, self-soothing/grounding approaches or tools you usually use.

## **Plan**

Book a seat at the end of an aisle or near an exit for space and ease of movement.

If you think you might need to leave the auditorium frequently, there'll be an open-door policy where audience members are free to go in and out as needed.

# **While you're watching *Grenfell: in the words of survivors***

## **Break**

If you need to take a break and leave the auditorium, take your time, find some space, use your grounding strategies or get some fresh air for as long as you need.

## **Get support**

If you're struggling to soothe yourself, please reach out to get some support.

# **After the performance**

## **Find some nature**

If you can, try looking out of the window or going for a walk. Experiencing nature can be beneficial to our wellbeing and help us feel grounded.

## **Listen to some music**

It could be calming and gentle or make you want to move your body, whatever makes you feel good.

## **Journalling**

Write down your thoughts and how you're feeling. It could be on some paper or on your phone.

# **Self-care resources available at the theatre**

## **Front of House support**

For every performance of *Grenfell: in the words of survivors*, there will be Front of House staff should you need extra support. They are skilled in providing you with the support you may need if you are having a challenging response to the show. All Customer Service Assistants are first aid-trained and are on hand to help you exit the space, if you require.

## **Open-door policy**

Throughout the performance you're free to leave the auditorium, if you need to. There are screens in the foyer if you'd like to continue watching the performance. If you'd like to re-enter the auditorium, our Front of House team will endeavor to help you if it is safe and practical.

## **Screens**

The performance will also be shown on a screen in the foyer. If you need to physically remove yourself from the auditorium, but would like to continue to watch the performance, you can.

## **Quiet space**

There will be a quiet space away from the foyer that is available for use at every performance. This space will be clearly sign-posted and staff will also be on hand to direct you, if you need assistance.

# **Synopsis**

## **NB: this contains spoilers**

### **Act 1**

The first act introduces us to a group of people who lived in Grenfell Tower. They talk about themselves, their flats, how they got there and what they liked about living in the Tower. We hear what it was like to live through the refurbishment works and residents' concerns about the work being done. Interspersed with these accounts, are references to an earlier fire in Lakanal House and subsequent letters between a parliamentary committee and successive ministers of housing where the committee tries, unsuccessfully, to get the ministers to change the building regulations. We also see small sections of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry where builders talk about cost savings, and about what they knew about the building regulations. The act ends with Grenfell survivors talking about what they did on the day before the fire, with some of the original 999 call about a fire in a single flat.

### **Content/trigger warnings**

- Themes of discrimination, prejudice, racism, ableism, corruption
- Reference to a traumatic event and multiple deaths, including child death

*There will be an interval after Act 1.*

### **Act 2**

Act 2 starts with more of that original 999 call and it follows our group of survivors through the night of the fire. We hear how and when they each got

out and we hear Inquiry evidence from some of the fire fighters. We also hear the Inquiry's cross-examination of some of the corporate companies who made the materials that caused Grenfell Tower to burn so fiercely and so fast. This act ends with an account of the funeral of the 72nd resident of the Tower (the wife of one of the survivors featured in the play) and the names of the 72 people who died are shown on screens.

### **Content/trigger warnings**

- The second act contains first-hand, graphic and disturbing accounts of the Grenfell Tower fire and evacuation, as it happened on the 14 June 2017
- Reference to dead bodies, both adults and children
- Themes of fire, death (including child death), suicide, ableism and social injustice
- Depiction of physical injury

### **Act 3**

Act 3 is a short film. A section of the audience will be asked to move and sit on the carpeted floor to watch this film (in order to allow a big screen to come down). The film features the real people of Grenfell Tower, some whom we've met in the play and some new ones. They talk about the aftermath of the fire, about the strength of their community, about what justice means to them and what an audience might do after they leave. Intercut with these interviews is footage of a group of parents and children making something. By the end of the film, we realise that they were making the green hearts that are carried in the Grenfell Silent Walks, which now occur every six months. We'll see footage of the June 2023 Silent Walk and then, when the film is over, a set of these hearts will be carried into the audience. Audience members holding these hearts will be asked to carry them out and place them in specially provided planters outside the theatre. As they leave, the screen will scroll up and we'll see 72 lights on their vacated chairs.

## **Additional resources**

Headspace Calm for Experiencing Flashbacks NAPAC (National Association for People Abused in Childhood) have created this article to help you understand how to support yourself when you may be recalling a traumatic incident that happened to you

[www.napac.org.uk/flashbacks](https://www.napac.org.uk/flashbacks) <https://www.thesurvivorstrust.org/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=3cbb806f-2e82-44df-8207-2ee8d8567948>

My Little Book of Coping Skills

[https://shout.ams3.cdn.digitaloceanspaces.com/giveusashout/media/documents/coping\\_skills\\_final2022.pdf](https://shout.ams3.cdn.digitaloceanspaces.com/giveusashout/media/documents/coping_skills_final2022.pdf)

Self-help guides: for you, as well as supporting someone you care about

<https://www.sarsas.org.uk/self-help-guides>

Guides to help with healing

<https://www.thesurvivorstrust.org/understanding-healing>

Anna Freud Self-Help Hub - this resource hub has been created for young people, but it contains lots of self-help tips and suggestions which anyone could find useful.

<https://www.annafreud.org/on-my-mind/self-care/>