

**National  
Theatre**

# **CONNECTIONS 2024**

## **Connections 2024 Portfolio – Self-Care Guide**

### **What is Connections?**

Connections is the National Theatre's annual, nationwide youth theatre festival. The programme has been established for 29 years with a celebrated history of championing the talent of young people from across the UK.

Every year, we commission ten new plays for young people to perform, bringing together some of the UK's most exciting writers with the theatre-makers of tomorrow. We work with over 250 companies and over 6,000 young people annually from across the UK.

Our 2024 portfolio consists of ten plays which cover a range of themes and ideas. The kit will take you through each of the plays and give you more information about what to expect when engaging with them.

### **What is the Self-Care Guide For?**

This toolkit has been designed to offer support to anyone engaging with any of the ten 2024 Connections plays, especially anyone who might be impacted by any of their content. We hope this toolkit provides you with specialist resources and tools.

This kit goes through the portfolio play by play, and includes:

- Self-care suggestions
- Further reading and resources about self-care
- A synopsis and content guidance for each play – if you would like further details about the full plot of any play, please email [connections@nationaltheatre.org.uk](mailto:connections@nationaltheatre.org.uk).
- Helplines and support

This toolkit takes inspiration from the work of [20 Stories High](#), [Clean Break](#) and the [Survivors Trust](#).

## Further reading and resources about self-care

[The Mix](#) – a support service for young people aged up to 25.

[Anna Freud Self Help Hub](#) - a resource hub created for young people, which contains lots of self-help tips and suggestions.

## Self-Care Suggestions

### Watch with someone

Bring a friend to the theatre or watch the livestream with someone you trust.

### Talk to someone

If you find any of the content distressing, try talking to someone you trust or contacting one of the organisations we list below.

### Read the Summary

If you think the content warnings suggest that you might find the play difficult to watch, read the full synopsis. This will help you prepare for any difficult bits or decide if the play is right for you.

### 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.

### Get some fresh air

Going for a walk or even just standing outdoors can help.

### Know if you need to step away

There is nothing wrong with deciding this isn't for you or it's too much. Walk away or turn it off, do what feels right for you.

## **AGE IS REVOLTING**, by Abi Zakarian

Choir is for mad old people, right?

When a group of school kids rebel against their boring music lesson they hit the wrong note and magically transform into their 80 year-old selves...and now live in a care home. Suddenly age, and their understanding of it, feels very relevant as they begin to confusedly navigate their way back to the present; no longer older, but maybe just a little wiser.

- **Cast size:** flexible, with a suggested minimum cast size of 14
- **Recommended for ages:** 13+
- **Content warnings:**
  - Some strong language

## **SHOUT**, by Alexis Zegerman

In a world full of words, how can Dana survive when she can't speak? Dana has selective mutism, but that doesn't stop her vivid imagination. Shout is a funny, moving play about anxiety, celebrating difference, and finding your voice. A play that wonders what exactly it takes to overcome anxiety and mental health issues when you're a teenager. It's not just the noise you make, that makes you who you are.

- **Cast size:** This play is written to be performed with a large ensemble group, but the minimum suggested cast size is 12
- **Recommended for ages:** 14+
- **Content warnings:**
  - Play explores experiences of anxiety disorders
  - Moments of characters struggling with poor mental health

## **ORCHESTRA**, by Charlie Josephine

A youth orchestra practises during half term holidays in preparation for a concert.

Unexpected events cause them all to interrogate their relationship with success. How do you protect the joy of the process whilst also wanting to be the best? Is striving for artistic excellence worth the pressure of losing soul?

- **Cast size:** This play is written to be performed with a large ensemble group, but the minimum suggested cast size is 11
- **Recommended for ages:** 13+
- **Content warnings:**
  - In one scene, there is a description of a character taking an overdose

## **DY ENW MARW / YOUR NAME IS DEAD**, by Elgan Rhys

In collaboration with Leo Drayton

**Mae M wedi cael enw newydd: Darn arall yn jig-so ei fywyd. Dilynwn ef dros ddiwrnod, wrth iddo wynebu perthnasoedd ar eu newid a'r heriau a llawenydd bod yn ifanc a thraws. Ydy'r jig-so byth yn cael ei gwblhau?**

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**M has got a new name: Another piece in the jigsaw that is his life. We follow him over a day, as he navigates shifting relationships and the challenges and joys of being young and trans. Does the jigsaw ever get completed?**

- **Cast size:** This play is written to be performed with a large ensemble group, but the minimum suggested cast size is 13
- **Recommended for ages:** 14+
- **Content warnings:**
  - Strong language (a version without strong language is available)
  - Domestic violence
  - Experience of gender dysphoria

## **KISS / MARRY / PUSH OFF CLIFF**, by Josh Azouz

A group of friends go camping – but after only one night, one of them is ostracised by the rest of the group and cast out into wilderness for something they said...or was it something they did...? It's strange and it's about to get stranger as friendships are tested, new alliances formed, trusts are broken and reality is twisted out of shape...the trip becomes a rite of passage...guided by a moral compass, that isn't entirely reliable.

- **Cast size:** This play is written to be performed with a large ensemble group, but the minimum suggested cast size is 9
- **Recommended for ages:** 14+
- **Content warnings:**
  - Strong language
  - Sexual references
  - Scenes of drug use and distribution
  - Scenes of alcoholism, and children drinking alcohol

## **THE PERIODICALS**, by Sian Owen

Set in the near future - a group of young people live as a feral group of techno-savvy fugitives, living off-the land which is a rubbish dump. They stay out of sight of the authorities - particularly the education authorities who are desperate to get them back into school because the optics are not good. However, school has lost its allure. When the young people are in school they are overlooked and underestimated - seen as being more trouble than they are worth. So now, for this group, school's out forever.

- **Cast size:** This play is written to be performed with a large ensemble group, but the minimum suggested cast size is 8
- **Recommended for ages:** 14+
- **Content warnings:**
  - Strong language



## **REPLICA**, by Titas Halder

Something happened on the school trip. One of the class has been replaced by an exact replica of themselves. At least that's what everyone's saying. Once a rumour starts, it can be difficult to remember what is real - or *who*. Convinced that there is an impostor walking among them, a group of teenagers is determined to root out the intruder. A mystery about friendship, the nature of truth, and humanity. When it comes to it, how do you prove that you are a human?

- **Cast size:** This play is written to be performed with a large ensemble group, but the minimum suggested cast size is 12
- **Recommended for ages:** 16+
- **Content warnings:**
  - Strong language
  - Some mildly violent language, used in a sci-fi context

## **BACK IN THE DAY**, by Yasmeen Khan

A group of classmates are charged with the responsibility of being their school's well-being champions. In a freak occurrence they are transported back to the 80s via an impromptu and heavily improvised roller disco. Here they discover they're not the only ones with skeletons in the cupboard, and there was more to the 80s than glitterballs and strange haircuts.

- **Cast size:** This play is written to be performed with a large ensemble group, but the minimum suggested cast size is 12
- **Recommended for ages:** 13+
- **Content warnings:**
  - One moment of strong language

## **THE SAD CLUB** by Luke Barnes

With music by Adam Pleeth

**This is a musical about depression and anxiety. It's a collection of monologues, songs and duologues from all over time and space exploring what about living in this world stops us from being happy and how we might go about tackling those problems.**

- **Cast size:** This play is written to be performed with a large ensemble group, but the minimum suggested cast size is 12
- **Recommended for ages:** 13+
- **Content warnings:**
  - Themes of mental health
  - Strong language
  - References to sex
  - Underage drinking

## **WIND/RUSH GENERATION(S)** by Mojisola Adebayo

This is a play about the British Isles, its past and its present. Set in a senior common room, in a prominent university, a group of first year undergraduates are troubled, not by the weight of their workload, but by a 'noisy' ghost. So they do what any group self-respecting and intelligent university students would do in such a situation – they get out the Ouija Board to confront their spiritual irritant and lay them to rest – only to be confronted by the full weight of Britain's colonial past – in all its gory glory. However, if you think you know about British history, Empire, slavery, economics, racism and humanity, then this play might get you to think again. As the planch on the Ouija Board skates from letter to letter at an ever-increasing breakneck speed, the students are catapulted through space and time, witnessing the injustices, incongruities and inhumanity of the past. This is a smorgasbord of genres and styles. Fusing naturalism, with physical theatre, spoken-word, absurdism, poetry and direct address – this is event-theatre that whips along with the grace, pace and the hypnotic magnetism of a hurricane.

- **Cast size:** This play is written to be performed with a large ensemble group, but the minimum suggested cast size is 8 (with a core group of 6) or up to 30, ideally with a mixture of genders.
- **Recommended for ages:** 15+
- **Content Warnings:**
  - Strong and graphic language including:
  - Racially abusive language – including the 'N word'
  - Language describing the racially motivated abuse of power and violations and attacks
  - References to colonialism
  - References to genocide
  - References to Human Rights abuse
  - Allusions to gun violence

## Helplines and Support

### [Childline](#)

Childline offers free, confidential advice and counselling for young people aged up to 19 on youth specific issues. They can be contacted by phone, or live chat and email [via their website](#).

Phone: 0800 1111

### [Samaritans](#)

Samaritans can be called 24 hours a day, every day of the year, and will listen and offer a safe space to speak about issues that are impacting you emotionally.

Phone: 116 123

Text: SHOUT to 85258

### [National Suicide Prevention Helpline](#)

National Suicide Prevention Helpline UK is an overnight helpline who offer a supportive listening service to anyone with thoughts of suicide, open from 6pm to 3.30am.

Phone: 0800 689 5652

Email: [info@spbristol.org](mailto:info@spbristol.org)

### [Mind](#)

Mind is the UK's mental health charity, offering signposting to local services to support anyone living with mental health issues. [Their website](#) contains advice and tools for many issues, including who contacts for mental health emergencies, and [a page](#) listing useful contacts for people who are dealing with racism.

Phone: 0300 123 3393

Email: [info@mind.org.uk](mailto:info@mind.org.uk)

### [FRANK](#)

Frank offers honest and confidential information and advice about drug use, and signposts support services for anyone concerned about a friend, family member, or their own drug use.

Phone: 0300 123 6600

Text: 82111

Email: <https://www.talktofrank.com/contact>

### [Drinkaware](#)

drinkaware provides independent advice, information and tools to help people understand alcohol. Their website offers [advice and support](#) for a range of issues and questions relating to alcohol use.

### [withyou](#)

We Are With You is a charity focuses on substance use, offering an online chat service to help people understand addiction and access tools they need to support themselves and others.

### **The Good Grief Trust**

The Good Grief Trust is a support system run by people who have experienced bereavement, for people who are experiencing bereavement. They provide a [map of grief support in the UK](#), as well as advice, resources, and pop up events.

Email: [hello@thegoodgrieftrust.org](mailto:hello@thegoodgrieftrust.org)

### **Gendered Intelligence**

Gendered Intelligence is a charity that exists to increase understandings of gender diversity and improve trans people's quality of life. They offer a wide range of support, and have expertise in professional and educational services, youth and community services and public engagement.

### **Mermaids**

Mermaids supports transgender, non-binary and gender-diverse children and young people, as well as their families and professionals involved in their care. They run a helpline open on weekdays, and have a range of support on their website.

Helpline: 0800 8010400

Email: <mailto:info@mermaidsuk.org.uk>

### **Youth Offending Services (YOS) | Brighter Futures for Children**

Brighter Futures for Children's Youth Offending Services offer advice, support, and activities for young people – or families of young people – who have entered the justice system, to prevent reoffending and provide support through the legal system.

Phone: 0118 937 2420

Email: [reading.yos@brighterfuturesforchildren.org](mailto:reading.yos@brighterfuturesforchildren.org)

### **Tender**

Tender is an arts charity working with young people to prevent domestic abuse and sexual violence by promoting healthy relationships based on equality and respect, by coordinating and delivering workshops in schools, youth settings, sixth forms and universities.

Email: [home@tender.org.uk](mailto:home@tender.org.uk)