
Self-Care Guide & Content Warnings.

For Black Boys Who Have Considered Suicide When The Hue Gets Too Heavy *by* Ryan Calais Cameron.

Royal Court Theatre.

In association with New Diorama Theatre and Nouveau Riche.

Self-Care Guide: For Black Boys...

This document was originally designed to support audiences attending performances of *For Black Boys Who Have Considered Suicide When The Hue Gets Too Heavy* by Ryan Calais Cameron at New Diorama Theatre, 12th Oct.—6th Nov. 2021 and repurposed for the Royal Court production in March 2022.

We know this show might be challenging to engage with for some audiences, especially if you're affected by the content.

In an analysis of racism, racial discrimination and racist stereotypes, the show explores a group of characters whose experiences include violence, toxic relationships and forms of trauma including sexual abuse and child abuse. There are themes of suicide and suicidal ideation throughout.

We hope the information and resources in this document will help audiences experiencing the show, and support planning for anyone who may be concerned about their visit.

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About the show

*“I found a king in me and now I love you
I found a king in you and now I love me.”*

Described by the writer Ryan Calais Cameron as a ‘Black boy fantasia’, *For Black Boys* was developed from workshops with young Black men examining their experiences of mental health and emotional wellbeing. The play articulates the heartache, confusion, rage and desires of young Black men.

For Black Boys combines poetic text, dialogue, music and movement to follow six characters in a form of group therapy, unearthing the experiences and emotional states that have led them to this moment. The play explores how the pressures placed on Black men contribute to emotional and mental trauma and the threat of additional Black suicides. It is also an affirmative work, calling for Black men to first love themselves then one another by recognising the redeeming forces of the King that is within.

Age recommendation: 15+.

Content warnings

For Black Boys contains strong themes which some people may find difficult. Analysing racism, racial discrimination and racist stereotypes, the cast tear through toxic masculinity in their community. Discussing relationships, family, love, bereavement and fatherhood, we learn how their experiences have shaped their world view.

Through the characters' dialogue, we delve into their pasts and childhood trauma and how that has led them to this group. There are themes of suicide and suicidal ideation throughout and particularly at the end.

Helplines & support

If you're affected by the show's themes and need support, or just want someone to chat to, you can call **Samaritans on 116 123** any time 24/7 for free.

If you prefer to text, the UK has a free 24/7 service: just text **SHOUT to 85258**.

If you don't need immediate support but would like to learn more about mental health and services that may be available for yourself or someone you know, we'd recommend looking into the following organisations:

MIND

<https://www.mind.org.uk/>

Black Minds Matter

<https://www.blackmindsmatteruk.com/>

The Black, African and Asian Therapy Network

<https://www.baatn.org.uk/>

The Brave Project

@the_braveproject on Instagram

The performance company have also had support during rehearsals from a professional drama therapist, Wabriya King, to whom we are all grateful.

Self-care suggestions

If you're concerned about attending the show, there are a few things we'd suggest that might help.

Read the summary

Have a look at the the **full character summaries** on the next page which will give you a clearer and more detailed idea of what will happen to help you prepare. If it doesn't sound like it's for you, that's completely fine.

Come with a friend

It might be worth seeing if you can book to see the show with a friend, family member or someone you trust.

During the show

There is nothing wrong with deciding that the show isn't for you, or that it's too much. During the performance, you're welcome to leave the auditorium at any point. The venue's bar will be remain open during and after the show. A staff member will help find an appropriate moment to re-enter, if you'd like.

After the show

At the end of the performance, the auditorium will stay open as a reflective space for 15 minutes. Feel free to stay and take your time. If you've found the show distressing, we'd suggest talk to someone you're with, calling a friend, or contacting one of the support services listed on the previous page.

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.

Character summaries

The play presents six characters exploring their own life experiences and mental health. If you'd like to know more about the content and themes that will come up, here is a detailed summary for each one.

Obsidian addresses what it means to be a 'badman', detailing how trying to impress girls resulted in him witnessing an incident of knife crime first-hand. The victim is depicted dying in his arms at the end of the show. This experience has caused him to become depressed, and he references suicidal ideation.

Sable explores relationships, love and promiscuity as he details the way in which he interacts with women as a mixed-race man, revealing his insecurities around self-worth and attraction. He explores his relationship with his father, and almost becomes a father himself, introducing themes of implied pregnancy termination. Sable also addresses police brutality, and how young Black men are perceived in the eyes of the law.

Pitch navigates 'what it means to be Black' as someone who thinks of themselves as an 'a-typical' Black man. Pitch discusses what it is like to exist in a world that expects you to be one way, when you are not. He explains how his insecurities have affected his experiences of courtship, and how they stem from childhood trauma.

Onyx embraces the use of the 'N' word as a term for brotherhood, and in order to address white-washing of his culture. He opens up about how his abusive relationship with his father taught him to be a man. With reference to his unrequited love life, Onyx explains his understanding of love and what it means to be loved. His experiences have resulted in gang life and smoking weed, which evolves into psychosis.

Midnight discusses whether Black history, as taught in the UK, is useful to or welcomed by his community. Touching on slavery and its atrocities, Midnight highlights how he feels about himself and his insecurities. Midnight opens up about his experiences of sexual abuse as a child, and the trauma he has taken with him. In discussions around love and relationships, Midnight discusses erectile dysfunction and how he feels the abuse has affected his further life.

Jet is a closeted member of the LGBTQIA+ community, and he addresses the impact this has had on his culture and religious beliefs. His father's battle with cancer was part of his childhood, and is partly responsible for the toxic masculinity he carries in his own life.

Thanks & about self-care

In writing this document, we were inspired by recent approaches taken by several other companies. We are grateful to everyone whose work has informed our own approach, but especially the Self-Care Guide created for Clean Break's production of *Typical Girls* by Morgan Lloyd Malcolm at Sheffield Theatres. As that document explains:

'The concept of self-care comes from the Black Feminist movement. Self-care is important because it's about recognising that we experience discrimination and oppression because of how others react to who we are, or what we've experienced. 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.'

Finally, our thanks to you for reading this, and for coming to the show – if you choose to. We think it's a truly special piece of theatre, and look forward to sharing it with you.



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