

UNDERTOW



SHOCK THERAPY
PRODUCTIONS

AN ORIGINAL WORK THAT AIMS
TO HELP PEOPLE TO UNDERSTAND,
TO FEEL UNDERSTOOD,
AND INSPIRE HOPE.

UNDERTOW TEACHER'S NOTES

WRITTEN, DIRECTED AND PERFORMED BY:
SAM FOSTER & HAYDEN JONES

Undertow

Noun: Undertow; Plural Noun: Undertows

1. a current of water below the surface and moving in a different direction from any surface current.
2. “I was swept away by the undertow”
an implicit quality, emotion, or influence underlying the superficial aspects of something and leaving a particular impression.



SHOCK THERAPY PRODUCTIONS

ABOUT THE COMPANY

Shock Therapy Productions was founded in 2015 by Sam Foster and Hayden Jones and has quickly established itself as one of the leading performing arts companies based on the Gold Coast. In this year, the company was awarded Accelerated Triennial Funding by City of Gold Coast for operational costs and to assist in the growth of the company. In 2018 this funding was renewed for a further 3 years.

Shock Therapy Productions aims to deliver Transformative Arts Experiences, and tell stories that are meaningful, thought-provoking, dynamic and entertaining, celebrating both the confronting and cathartic nature of performance.

Working across theatre, film and live events, Shock Therapy Productions aims to establish itself as a leading company in the delivery of high quality, relevant, multidisciplinary performance and a leader in the Arts and Culture Sector on the Gold Coast as well as Nationally and Internationally.

The company has produced a rapidly expanding catalogue of works, including a number of original productions, won 5 Matilda Awards, performed at venues and Arts Festivals in both Australia and Internationally and is proudly sponsored by the City of Gold Coast Council.

FOR ALL ENQUIRIES AND BOOKINGS

E: education@shocktherapyproductions.com.au
www.shocktherapyproductions.com.au

AWARD WINS

2017 MATILDA AWARDS
Best Independent Production
– *The Forwards*

2016 MATILDA AWARDS
Best Independent Production
– *Viral*

2015 MATILDA AWARDS
Best Independent Production
– *The Pillowman*

Best Director, Sam Foster
– *The Pillowman*

Best Supporting Actor, Tama Matheson
– *The Pillowman*

AWARD NOMINATIONS

2021 MATILDA AWARDS
Best New Australian Work
– *Undertow*

Best Independent Production
– *Undertow*

Best Sound Design
– *Undertow*

2017 MATILDA AWARDS
Best Actor, Sam Foster
– *The Forwards*

Best Actress, Ellen Bailey
– *The Forwards*

2016 MATILDA AWARDS
Best New Australian Work
– *Viral*

Best Actor, Sam Foster
– *Viral*

Best Audio Visual Design, Nathan Sibthorpe
– *Viral*



MEET THE CREATORS

HAYDEN JONES – ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Hayden is a performer and contemporary performance maker, working across a range of forms including theatre, installation, immersive experiences and cross art-form collaborations. He has worked as an Actor, Director, Writer, Producer and workshop facilitator, for some of Australia's most recognised and innovative arts organisations. He is a co-founder of Shock Therapy Productions.

Hayden also has an extensive background working in Youth Theatre, Children's Theatre and Theatre-in-Education, writing and directing shows for young people, and touring nation-wide performing and teaching workshops.

SAM FOSTER – ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Sam is a storyteller, performer and theatre maker. He is an award-winning Actor, Director, Writer, Producer, Stunt Performer and Stunt Rigger as well as being a Physical Theatre Performer, Movement Director and workshop facilitator. He is the co-owner and co-founder of Shock Therapy Productions.

Sam works in theatre, film and large-scale events and has worked for a number of companies and festivals throughout his career. His career has taken him to New York, London, Namibia, South Africa, Denmark, Norway and India as well as all over Australia.

CONTENTS

- 6 Introduction
- 8 Acknowledgments
- 9 Synopsis
- 10 About the Show
- 10 Curriculum Links
- 11 References and Research
- 17 The Therapeutic Nature of Art
- 18 Pre-Performance Preparations
- 19 Post-Performance Questionnaire
- 21 Stylistic Influences
Epic Theatre, Physical Theatre and Tandem Narrative
- 24 Help, Support and Information
- 25 Feedback Survey
- 26 Script Excerpts





INTRODUCTION

Making a new piece of theatre is not something that we approach lightly. It is a huge undertaking and also a huge responsibility. We have experienced first-hand the power that theatre can have, to move people from the inside and change their lives.

We started out performing the work of the great Zeal Theatre, under the banner of Zeal Qld. This showed us the ability theatre has to impact people through story, and how that impact can ripple outward and even change the world. So, the standard was set high for us when we began creating our own original work as Shock Therapy.

As a company that makes issue based theatre, we are always trying to keep our finger on the pulse of relevant social themes and issues. Mental Health, coping with stress, relationships and identity are things that kept coming up on our radar as important topics, and are always high on the list of issues concerning youth in Australia. They are things that transcend all demographics and touch everyone, be it directly or indirectly.

For us personally, these issues are also very close to our hearts, having each had our own struggles with mental wellbeing and stress at various times in our lives, as well as witnessing the challenges faced by some of our own loved ones. This was a strong motivation for us and enabled us to approach the work from a very personal and empathetic place.

Creating a show that deals with Mental Health is a potential minefield, and we felt that for this reason, many companies often stay away from it altogether or address it in a superficial way. We felt compelled to create a work that dares to 'go there' and did so in an honest way, but we were aware of how important it was to do it responsibly. Thus, began the creation of *Undertow*.



The initial development was supported by SunPac, and involved research and brainstorming sessions, aimed at shaping loose ideas for narrative, characters and structure. We also connected and consulted with various Mental Health workers and organisations, such as Open Doors Youth Service and Headspace Southport, as well as conducted interviews with family, friends, colleagues, and people of particular interest who were referred to us.

It was important to us that the work destigmatize perceptions of mental illness, and encourage people to seek help. We wanted to portray mental health as something that affects everybody, and that no matter who you are, we all hurt and we all struggle. This is what makes us all human and this empathetic view is important to erase stigma and promote healthy dialogue.

Rather than trying to capture such a broad and diverse topic in one central protagonist, we settled on a fractured tandem narrative structure; multiple narratives which follow a cross section of characters of different ages and demographics, linked together by a shared setting (in this case a High School community) and each facing their own unique set of challenges.

We also made the deliberate decision to never label any disorders that characters may or may not have. We wanted to avoid the pitfalls of clichés and the stigma that can come with a label. Rather, it was our aim to show real, relatable and complex characters, struggling in very human ways, and hopefully have the viewer see themselves on stage to some degree.

Stylistically, we have kept much of our signature, multiple role-playing style, but overall, we wanted to give it a slightly different, more fluid feel. We made the transitions a feature of the work, blurring the edges between characters and scenes in a smooth and seamless way, as we shift between the narratives. We also wanted the audience to have to do a bit more work in piecing together the fragments of the story, deliberately leaving out the role of the narrator and bringing in a more 'dream-like' quality.

It was also important to find the humour in the piece wherever possible. Life is full of humour and charm, even in moments of tragedy, and capturing all of the bittersweet of real life is what makes this show feel both melancholy and uplifting.

The realities of mental illness can be dark, disturbing and heart-breaking, but hope always exists, even in the darkest places. Through tragedies we often find a silver lining that can direct our course towards something better, towards transformation, connection, communication, and towards wellness.

Making *Undertow* was at times a very emotional, confronting and personal process. Many people were very vulnerable in sharing their feelings and stories with us. For that, we are so grateful and we wanted to honour them by putting our very best into making this show, and to do it with honesty and sensitivity.

We hope *Undertow* can help people to understand, to feel understood, and inspire hope.

Sam and Hayden – Managing and Artistic Directors



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Shock Therapy would like to thank SunPAC for supporting the development and presentation of the World Premiere of *Undertow*; City of Gold Coast for being our major sponsor; Headspace Southport, Open Doors Youth Service, and Queensland Mental Health Commission for your consultation, advice and interest in the work. All of the clients of these organisations and other individuals that trusted and shared with us, you are all incredibly brave and amazing and this work couldn't have happened without you.

Thanks to Guy Webster for your stunning Sound Design and contribution to the work; Alex Butt for your generosity and work on the development; Joshua Thomason for your support and connecting us with Headspace; Marja-Liisa Rintala for your professional advice and contribution to the teachers notes; Ellen Bailey for your stellar voice over work in the 'Psychologist' scene; Playlab for the publication; Saffron Jensen Photography and Design; Dane Scott Creative; the board of Shock Therapy Arts Ltd consisting of Paul Bishop (Chair), Andrew Larder (Secretary) and Inke Loos; and our producer David Carberry.

Love and gratitude to our family and friends for their ongoing love and support, especially Mike and Julene Foster, Barbara and Keith Maher, Wendy and Erkki Rintala, Veronica Neave, Kaspar Foster, Marja-Liisa Rintala, Charlii Gregory, Hunter Gregory, and Essi Rintala-Jones. Thanks to Stefo Nantsou, Tom Lycos and the Zeal Theatre family for the years of knowledge, inspiration and support you continue to give us. *Shock Therapy acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of country throughout Australia and their connections to land, water and community. We pay our respect to their elders past and present and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today.*



SYNOPSIS

***Undertow* is an original work that explores themes of resilience, mental health, relationships, identity and empathy. It is an honest and powerful look at the hidden forces, beneath the surface that move us and determine the choices we make and the actions we take.**

The show centres around a high school community and the events that take place over the course of two weeks. It follows three main characters from a range of backgrounds, all dealing with their own unique challenges. As the story plays out we see the profound and lasting impact that these events will have on each character.

Shock Therapy draw on a range of film conventions and physical theatre techniques to push their signature style in a new direction, blurring the line between different realities. The result is storytelling that is fluid and inventive, sweeping you up in its current as the story pulls you deeper.

***Undertow* is written, directed, designed and performed by Hayden Jones and Sam Foster.**

Music by Sam Foster and Guy Webster.

Sound Design by Guy Webster.



ABOUT THE SHOW

UNDERTOW ORIGINAL TEXT BY:

Sam Foster & Hayden Jones

DEvised & DIRECTED BY:

Sam Foster & Hayden Jones

LIGHTING DESIGN:

Laura Jade

SOUND DESIGN:

Guy Webster

MUSIC:

Sam Foster and Guy Webster

DURATION

55 minutes + 10 minutes post-show Q&A

SUITABILITY

Grades 8 – 12

CURRICULUM LINKS

ESSENTIAL LEARNINGS

The Arts: Drama

AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM

- Critical and Creative Thinking
- Personal & Social Competence
- Ethical Understanding

QCAA - SENIOR DRAMA

IA1; IA3

Unit 1: Share

Unit 2: Reflect **Unit 4:** Transform

STYLES, FORMS AND CONVENTIONS

Theatre for Young People, Physical Theatre, Storytelling, Realism, Epic Theatre, Contemporary Theatre, Theatre of Social Comment, Multiple Role, Mime, Live Music

THEMES

Resilience, Mental Health, Relationships, Identity

SCRIPT AVAILABLE FOR PURCHASE

<https://playlabtheatre.com.au/shop-publications/educational-notes/undertow-by-hayden-jones-and-sam-foster/>



REFERENCES AND RESEARCH

The research involved with *Undertow* was vital in order for us to gain a broad understanding of the full scope and breadth of the issues involved, as well as the detailed, personal accounts within that vast landscape. The characters and their individual narratives needed to be universal enough to be relatable, but also specific, nuanced and based in truth.

It was going to be impossible for us to cover the entire scope of mental health in one show, so we decided to focus on some of the more common aspects to work into the central characters; anxiety, depression, PTSD, and Gender Identity.

We decided it was important to include Gender Identity into the show after our contact person at Headspace Southport mentioned that around 25% of their clients are from the LGBTIQAP+ community. Our further research supported this point. We found that a disproportionate number of LGBTIQAP+ people experience poorer mental health outcomes and have a higher risk of suicidal behaviours than their peers. These health outcomes

are directly related to experiences of stigma, prejudice, discrimination and abuse on the basis of being LGBTIQAP+.

We made contact with Open Doors Youth Service in Fortitude Valley, and were invited to attend one of their drop-in sessions. Open Doors Youth Service provides support to young people with diverse genders, sex and sexualities. They support young people who identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer, Asexual, Pansexual, Sistergirl or Brotherboy aged 12-24 across South East Queensland.

We had the privilege of spending several hours talking and listening with a group of around thirty LGBTIQAP+ young people within a safe and supportive environment, with Open Doors Counsellors and staff present. We shared with them our intentions for the show and gave them the opportunity for feedback, and to share their experiences and perspectives on a voluntary and anonymous basis. Many of these young people shared with us in-depth personal accounts. It was at times confronting, but also a wonderfully informative and eye-opening experience.



Within the first development phase we also interviewed a Transgender colleague of an associate, and had many discussions with a personal friend whose partner was in the process of transitioning at the time.

As a result of all of this research, we felt that we couldn't make a show about mental illness, stress and resilience, and not represent a character from this demographic. Again, not because being LGBTIQAP+ makes them mentally ill, but because of the stigma, prejudice, discrimination and abuse that is directed at them.

During our research and development, we also attended a Y-Space event, held at Headspace Southport, where we spoke with some of their young clients and many professional mental health workers from many different organisations. From that event, we organised a free performance of *The Apology* for clients of Headspace Southport which was held at HOTA.

We also conducted many interviews with family and friends of varying ages from 13 years to 70 years old. One interview was with a family member

who is in the Australian Army and suffers from PTSD, which helped to serve as inspiration for the character of 'Phil'.

As well as informing the show and its characters, some of these interviews formed part of the soundscape for the opening physical sequence of the show.

Another true event that inspired some of the events in *Undertow* was a mass drug overdose at a local private school on the Gold Coast. A similar event happened again only a year later, at the same school. Even some of the minor, more comical characters and events in the show are inspired by real experiences we have had or people we have met over our years of touring schools.

The following statistics, links and references are some of the further research that inspired *Undertow*.

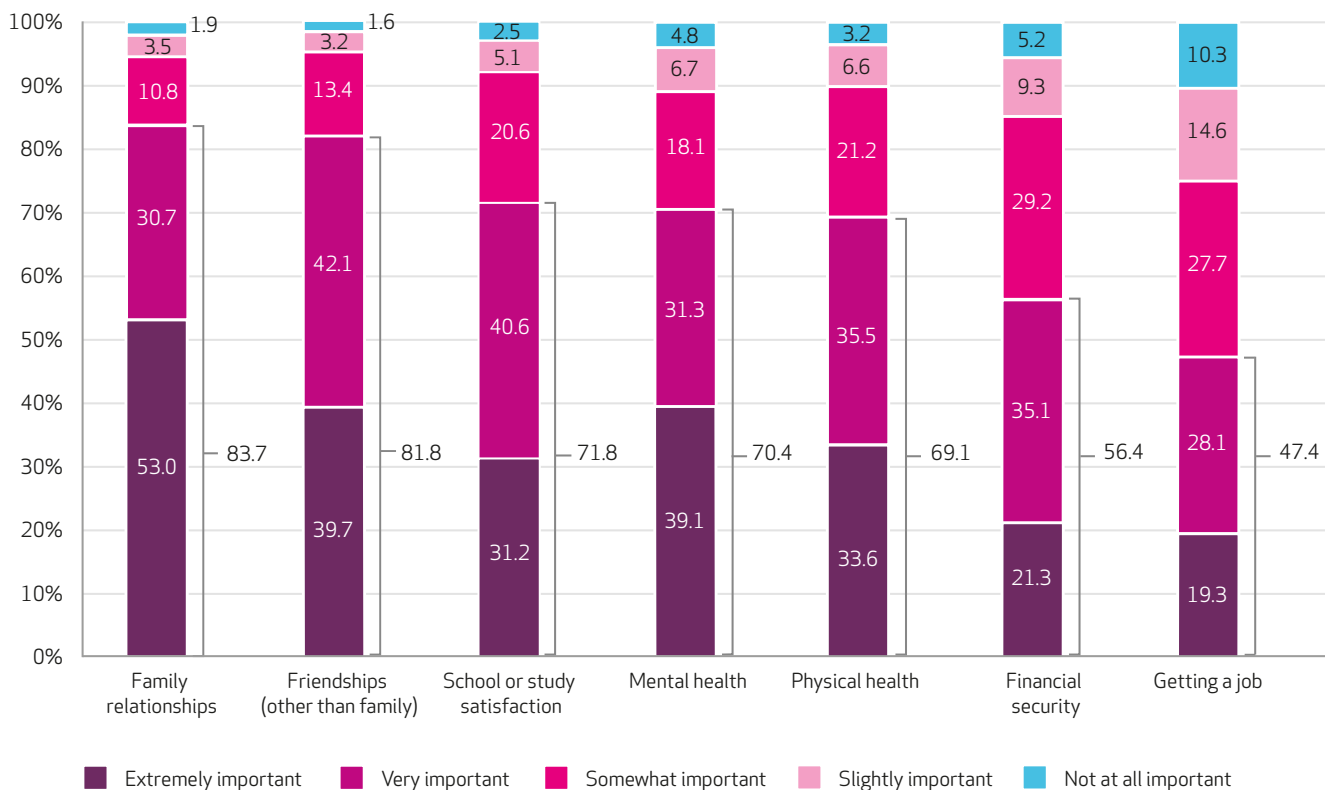
MISSION AUSTRALIA YOUTH SURVEY REPORT 2018

The top issues of personal concern to young people relate to mental health and challenges to wellbeing: coping with stress, school or study problems, mental health and body image.

Young people were asked to rank how concerned they had been about a number of issues over the past year. The responses for the top two concerns were consistent with previous years: coping with stress and school or study problems. Mental health was listed as an item for the first time in 2018 and was ranked the third highest rated issue of personal concern for young people. Over four in ten respondents indicated that they were either extremely or very concerned about coping with stress (43.1%). One third of young people were either extremely or very concerned about school or study problems (33.8%), while around three in ten were concerned about mental health (30.9%) and body image (30.4%).

**Quoted from the Mission Australia Youth Survey Report 2018*

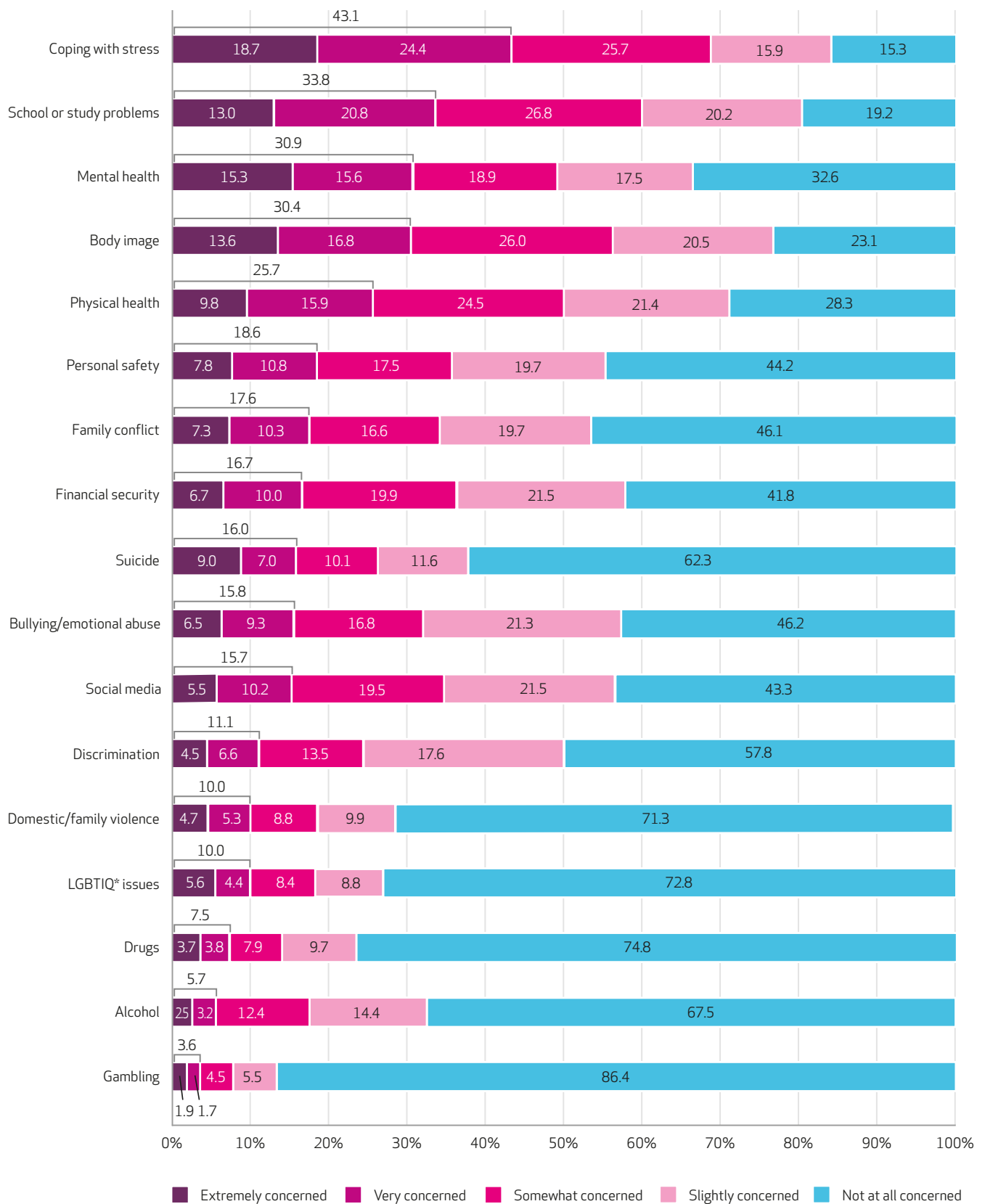
Figure 1.6: What young people value



Note: Items were ranked according to the summed responses for *extremely important* and *very important* for each item.

*TAKEN FROM THE MISSION AUSTRALIA YOUTH SURVEY REPORT 2018

Figure 1.7: Issues of personal concern to young people



Note: Items were ranked according to the summed responses for extremely concerned and very concerned for each item.

*Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Intersex, Queer (LGBTIQ) issues.

*TAKEN FROM THE MISSION AUSTRALIA YOUTH SURVEY REPORT 2018

BLACK DOG INSTITUTE

Every Year:

- Over 65,000 Australians make a suicide attempt
- More than 3,000 Australians died by suicide in 2017
- Suicide is the leading cause of death for Australians between 15 and 44 years of age
- Young Australians are more likely to take their own life than die in motor vehicle accidents
- In 2017, about 75% of people who died by suicide were males and 25% were females
- In 2017, the suicide rate among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people was approximately twice that of non-Indigenous Australians

PREVENTING MENTAL ILLNESS IN SCHOOLS

A global research analysis conducted by the Black Dog Institute shows that national delivery of school-based prevention programs will reduce incidence of depression and anxiety.

Depression is the leading cause of disease burden in Australia and predicted to be the leading cause of disease burden across the world by 2030.

In Australia, around 3 million people will experience depression or anxiety every year, and up to 20% of Australians will experience anxiety or depression before turning 18. Early onset of mental illness is associated with poorer health and social outcomes including increased risk of drug and alcohol abuse, unemployment and suicide.

According to research conducted by Black Dog Institute, and published this week in *Clinical Psychological Review*, delivery of quality prevention programs via the school system will significantly reduce the community burden of depression and anxiety by preventing or delaying onset, and reducing severity.

FREE SCHOOL RESOURCES PROVIDED BY BLACK DOG INSTITUTE:

[READ MORE](https://www.blackdoginstitute.org.au/education-training/community-and-schools/free-school-resources)

(<https://www.blackdoginstitute.org.au/education-training/community-and-schools/free-school-resources>)

“Our meta-analysis of research studies from across the world clearly showed that school-based prevention programs do reduce the impact of depression and anxiety,”
says lead author Dr Aliza Werner-Seidler.

“This is a significant finding, as schools are the ideal location to deliver mental health interventions.”

“Not only do they enable us to reach all young Australians, the integration of programs into the school curricula alleviates the barriers to treatment that we know young people are currently experiencing – stigma, time, access and cost.”

“These findings highlight the enormous potential of school-based prevention,”
says Dr Werner-Seidler,

“We strongly believe that the delivery of prevention programs via primary and high schools should be further investigated as a matter of priority as the benefits could be life-saving.”

A.Werner-Seidler et al. (2016)

School-based depression and anxiety prevention programs for young people: A systematic review and meta-analysis. Clinical Psychological Review 51 : 30–47

*Quoted from the Black Dog Institute website

BEYOND BLUE

What is PTSD?

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is a particular set of reactions that can develop in people who have been through a traumatic event which threatened their life or safety, or that of others around them. This could be a car or other serious accident, physical or sexual assault, war or torture, or disasters such as bushfires or floods. As a result, the person experiences feelings of intense fear, helplessness or horror.

Quoted from the Beyond Blue Website

HEALTH DIRECT

What is Gender Dysphoria?

Gender dysphoria is the discomfort a person feels with how their body is perceived and allocated a gender by other people. The experience may occur when a person feels their biological or physical sex doesn't match their sense of their own gender.

This feeling, that there is a mismatch, can trigger a range of responses. Some people experience serious distress, anxiety and emotional pain, which can affect their mental health. Others experience only low-level distress – or none at all.

For this reason, gender dysphoria is no longer considered a mental illness.

Quoted from the Health Direct Website

NATIONAL LGBTI HEALTH ALLIANCE

Compared to the general population, LGBTI people are more likely to attempt suicide in their lifetime, specifically:

- LGBTI young people aged 16 to 27 are five times more likely
- Transgender people aged 18 and over are nearly eleven times more likely
- People with an intersex variation aged 16 and over are nearly six times more likely
- LGBT young people who experience abuse and harassment are more likely to attempt suicide

Quoted from the National LGBTI Health Alliance Website

2020 Snapshot of Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Statistics for LGBTI People:

[READ MORE](#)

(<https://lgbtihealth.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/2020-Snapshot-of-Mental-Health-and-Suicide-Prevention-Statistics-for-LGBTI-People-LGBTI-Health-Alliance.pdf>)

SCHOOL DRUG OVERDOSE

Article:

[READ MORE](#)

(<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2019/aug/07/two-gold-coast-schoolboys-drug-overdose-scare>)

THE THERAPEUTIC NATURE OF ART

BY MARJA-LIISA RINTALA
AdvDipAT, BA, GradDipDT, MMH

Humans have been using art to tell stories for over 40,000 years, making marks on cave walls to document and share their experiences. Through storytelling, traditions were passed on, lessons were learnt, and communities were built. We continue to this day to use creativity such as dance, drama, art making, music and more to express our interior and exterior world. As a Creative Arts Therapist, I employ these tools to help clients explore conscious and unconscious material that may be difficult to articulate into words, allowing them to externalise it in creative ways. This is performed safely, through the use of dramatic distancing, with techniques such as enrolling others to perform the story or through approaching the story in novel ways, such as in poetry, mask, drawing or song. Creative play provides opportunities to see alternate narratives to problem-saturated stories, to try on alternate roles and behaviours and to move beyond hurtful stories and beliefs.

Shock Therapy's *Undertow*, while not therapy, harnesses these creative tools in its exploration of mental health narratives played out on stage. Providing the audience with a range of narratives and roles, it can provide a distanced view to what may be some viewers own experience, or experience of someone they know. Through witnessing a range of roles, the viewer is given opportunity to consider alternatives to their dominant narrative and inspired to consider flexible ways of thinking. Art challenges our normative way of thinking, brings our stories to the surface and remind us that while our story may be deeply personal, we are not alone. This is something that I feel *Undertow* achieves beautifully.

One study into the benefits of receptive engagement in the arts (attending theatre, art gallery's etc) showed evidence of an arts-mental health relationship with engagement of 2 or more hours per week in the arts being significantly correlated to better mental well-being (Davies, et al; 2015). Furthermore, in the discussions after the show, viewers have the opportunity to delve further into the stories, and bring light onto a topic that is so often undiscussed.



Reframing is at the heart of the effectiveness of stories. We put together our personal stories largely unconsciously – the tale of what we are, what we can do, the ideas, behaviours, thoughts, emotions and images we find acceptable. All kinds of influences and experiences affect what we become, some of them apparently benign and possibly wonderful, some of them harrowing and even traumatic. But the most central element is how we view those influences and those experiences. This is the frame, the story, the angle. It is more or less inevitably a limited perspective, which may be modified in time by new influences and experiences. The new story that is introduced to us at the right time in the right way provides that influence and experience quickly, extending our perspectives in a way that is unthreatening – since, after all, it's only a story (Parkinson, 2009).

Due to the sensitive nature of topics discussed in *Undertow*, I encourage caregivers to provide access to onsite and external support services to the students if required. Please refer to the Help, Support and Information section of this document.

References

- Davies, C., Knuiman, M. & Rosenberg, M. (2015). *The art of being mentally healthy: a study to quantify the relationship between recreational arts engagement and mental well-being in the general population*. BMC Public Health 16, 15 <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-015-2672-7>
- Parkinson, R. (2009). *Transforming Tales*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers



PRE-PERFORMANCE PREPARATIONS

With the class read the synopsis

DISCUSS

- Have you seen a play about mental health and resilience before?
- What feelings does the title *Undertow* evoke for you? What do you think it is going to be about?
- What are your expectations of *Undertow*? Do you think it will be funny? Sad? Confronting? Boring and predictable? Preachy and lame?

INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITY

In small groups have students discuss ideas for a character who is privately struggling with life.

- What are they struggling with?
- How does it affect their behaviour? Their relationships?
- What events and circumstances may have led to this?

Have the students devise a short performance where they tell this story in a few short scenes. Think about what is essential to the story, the key images, characters and how to transition between the scenes to make it watchable.



POST-PERFORMANCE QUESTIONNAIRE

After viewing the performance of *Undertow*, answer the following questions:

1. What do you believe was the key message of the play?
2. How did the actors communicate changes in character, scene and action?
3. What impact did the music and sound design have on the drama?
4. Try to recall the plot. What stages led to the eventual climax?
5. What dramatic conventions have Shock Therapy Productions used to relate the play to young people?
6. Put simply, symbols are items that represent something else. They can be evident in a play in many aspects of the production including design, sound, props, language, movement/ action, blocking etc. List some examples of symbols used in *Undertow* and state their significance to the drama.
7. This performance aims to educate and entertain the audience. Do you believe that this production effectively achieves this aim? Why?
8. Do you believe that the actors developed a strong connection with the audience? As a member of the audience what kind of emotions did you experience during the performance?
9. What do you believe is the best aspect of *Undertow*?
10. Shock Therapy shows focus on the acting and storytelling rather than on elaborate production. Discuss the use of minimal props and set. How does this staging contribute to the production?



WRITE A REVIEW OF THE PERFORMANCE

Shock Therapy Productions values students' observations of their program and performances. They welcome written students' responses which may be emailed to:

admin@shocktherapyproductions.com.au

STYLISTIC INFLUENCES



Shock Therapy often take an eclectic approach to their style of theatre, drawing on a range of theatrical influences to create work that feels inventive and contemporary. Below are some of the main stylistic influences found in *Undertow*.

EPIC THEATRE

The term Epic Theatre was coined by 20th Century theatre practitioner Erwin Piscator. It became an ideological and stylistic approach to theatre and gave rise to several practitioners such as Vladimir Mayakovsky, Vsevolod Meyerhold and, most famously, Bertolt Brecht.

Epic theatre was a reaction against popular forms of theatre, particularly the naturalistic approach pioneered by Constantin Stanislavski. Like Stanislavski, Brecht disliked the shallow spectacle, manipulative plots, and heightened emotion of melodrama; but where Stanislavski attempted to engender real human behaviour in acting through the techniques of Stanislavski's system and to absorb the audience completely in the fictional world of the play, Brecht saw Stanislavski's methodology as producing escapism. Epic Theatre became in many ways the antithesis of this approach, taking a more direct response to the current political climate of the world at the time.

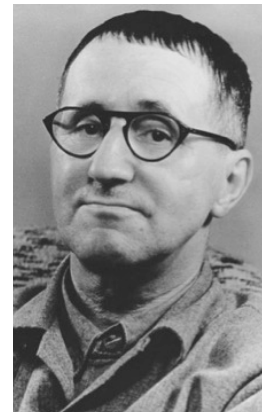
It was also a response to Richard Wagner's notion of "Gesamtkunstwerk" meaning "total or ideal work of art". Wagner believed that traditional/Aristotelian were the ultimate forms of theatre and Piscator and Brecht were much more interested in contemporary issues and social commentary. The focus was engaging critical thought and analysis from the actors and the audience.

Each play and character was a manifestation of Brecht's technique of alienation and stressed the importance of critical observation. He sought to create a dialectical relationship with a person- whether it was a character within a story or a member of the audience- and his or her society. It is through these, he believed, that the spectator is able to play a more active and intelligent role in the theatre production. Those who had once sat outside the realm of the stage become integral parts of its narrative, and the actor's actions became pivotal points of social commentary.

– Annette Roland, University of Chicago

Epic Theatre uses a range of conventions including narrative, montage, disjointed and non-linear episodes, metaphor, multiple role playing and stepping in and out of character, music and song, signs and captions and many more. Epic Theatre productions will often reveal elements of the staging process itself. The actors' characterisation and the use of set and props are designed to reinforce an idea rather than reality.

"We need a type of theatre which not only releases the feelings, insights and impulses possible within the particular historical field of human relations in which the action takes place, but employs and encourages those thoughts and feelings which help transform the field itself."



– Bertolt Brecht

Towards the end of Brecht's life, he rejected the term 'Epic Theatre', and preferred the term 'Dialectical Theatre'.

- What Epic conventions were used in *Undertow*?
- Did you think they used the conventions effectively?
- Did the use of the minimal set tell the story clearly enough?
- Which other Epic conventions do you think could work well in the show? How could they be included?



PHYSICAL THEATRE

Physical theatre can incorporate dance, acrobatics, text, AV and music to communicate a story. A physical language is developed by the group of performers and the performance is often created through improvising around certain themes and set tasks. This 'physical language' is then crafted into a structured series of movements that help to convey the story. Group devised Performance uses a creative process which is collaborative. Central to the process is the formulation of a common goal for the production.

Physical theatre can also include characterisation. Each character has their own unique movement quality, their own tempo, rhythm, weight, size, etc. The actor must use their physicality to create the character they are portraying. Shock Therapy often play multiple characters, like in *Undertow*, therefore requiring the performers to shift and change rapidly from one character to the next. This requires the actors to have a high level of physical awareness and control.

- What were some of the ways that Shock Therapy make their shows physical?
- Do you think the way the story was physicalized made it more interesting to watch?
- What was the effect of the opening movement sequence?

*IMAGE FROM THE CLEANERS BY SHOCK THERAPY PRODUCTIONS. PHOTO BY SAFFRON JENSEN.



TANDEM NARRATIVE

If you are thinking: ‘I want to show how a socio-political problem and/or human foibles affect a broad cross-section of society’, this is probably the form for you. Tandem Narratives contain equally important but separate stories (each with its own protagonist) running simultaneously on the same theme. This structure is more commonly found in film than in theatre, probably due in part to the editing capabilities and the ability to easily jump back and forth between timelines and locations. As fans of the storytelling conventions of film, Shock Therapy wanted to incorporate some of these ideas into this piece of theatre. Techniques such as ‘jump cuts’, ‘cross-fades’ and ‘bridge of sound’ can be found throughout *Undertow*.



FRACTURED TANDEM STRUCTURE

Fractured Tandem is a form of parallel narrative that uses flashbacks, time jumps, non-linearity, and fractured storylines.

Some film examples are: *21 Grams*, *Babel*, *The Hours*, *Crash*, *Rendition*, *Winged Creatures*. This structure typically involves fractured versions of equally important stories. This is a useful form if the subject matter involves:

1. unexpected, often tragic, connections between apparently or initially very disparate people, triggered by an accident or random event
2. several equally important stories, some or all fractured, running simultaneously sometimes in the same time frame, but often in several time frames
3. consequences, chain reactions linked to one event

Fractured tandem can also be used to inject suspense and a ‘detective story’ element into predictable tandem narrative scripts.



HELP, SUPPORT AND INFORMATION

LIFELINE

13 11 14

www.lifeline.org.au

KIDS HELPLINE

1800 55 1800

www.kidshelpline.com.au

BEYOND BLUE

1300 22 4636

www.beyondblue.org.au

HEADSPACE

<https://headspace.org.au>

REACH OUT

<https://au.reachout.com>

BLACK DOG INSTITUTE

www.blackdoginstitute.org.au

HEALTH DIRECT

www.healthdirect.gov.au

OPEN DOORS YOUTH SERVICES

www.opendoors.net.au/get-support/

NATIONAL LGBTI HEALTH ALLIANCE

www.lgbtihealth.org.au

MISSION AUSTRALIA

www.missionaustralia.com.au



CULTURE COUNTS SURVEY

Please take the teachers survey, will just take 5 to 10 minutes, your feedback is greatly appreciated and will help us to continually develop impactful work to young people across Queensland and beyond.

<https://culturecounts.cc/s/stteacherssurvey/splash>

SCRIPT EXCERPTS

Coach waves Connor over.

COACH:

Where the hell were you!?

CONNOR:

Sorry.

COACH:

Mate, your head is all over the place.

CONNOR:

I'm just having an off day.

COACH:

Rubbish. You've been playing like shit for weeks now and you know it, because we had to have this same chat last week, remember? What's going on? Is there something you need to get off your chest?

CONNOR:

No.

COACH:

You're the Captain Connor, all these other boys look to you. This is the wrong time of year to start coming undone. It doesn't matter how good of a season we've had, if we can't win our finals games from here on, then those nonces from St Morrison's will take the premiership.

Percy the Groundskeeper butts in.

PERCY:

Excuse me Coach! Sorry to interrupt...

COACH:

Not a problem Percy. What can I do ya for?

PERCY:

Just wanted to see how you found the turf today?

COACH:

Terrific as always. Perhaps a bit more spongy?

PERCY:

Glad you noticed. See that's because I added 30% Queensland Blue Couch to the Bermuda Couch Pure. The Queensland Blue gives it that bit of extra lushness you're referring to. Thought it would be a good idea to minimize the impact on the boys joints in the lead up to finals.

COACH:

Genius. That's why you're the best in the business, Percy.

PERCY:

Your words not mine coach. Now, I wanted to have a quick chat to you about that upcoming home game against Dugdale. I wanted to mention, if pace is a factor, I could engineer a fast end and a slow end, if it's of any benefit... off the record of course.

He taps his nose.

COACH:

I'm listening.

PERCY:

See up the favourable end, I'd invest in a bit of Princess 77 Couch.

COACH:

Oh yeah, it's a stunning grass.

PERCY:

It really is the gold standard in Couch. Quality meets hardiness, very difficult to go past.

COACH:

That sounds very interesting Percy, I'll have a think on it and let you know.

PERCY:

Don't mention it Coach, happy to be of service.

Percy goes to leave but remembers something.

Oh, and Coach, if you need any extra trainers or waterboys for the game, I'm keen and available. Just want to throw that out there.

COACH:

Thanks Percy, you're the man.

Percy exits.

COACH:

You see that level of commitment, Connor? That's what I expect. What a bloke...

If you can't get yourself together quicksmart, I'll have no choice but to strip you of your captaincy and sideline you for the rest of the season. Understand?

CONNOR:

Yes Coach.

Coach walks off, leaving Connor on his own.

COACH:

Percy! Hold up a minute. About that 77 couch.

CONNOR AT HOME

DAD:

You're late. You were supposed to be home by 3:30 to babysit your sister.

CONNOR:

Sorry, my bike got a flat, I had to walk it.

DAD:

You didn't think to call?

CONNOR:

My phone died.

DAD:

You're so bloody disorganised. I'm probably going to be late for my keynote now, which is such a great look, especially when the Mayor is going to be present. Now, I've prepared a lasagne and it's sitting in the oven, all you have to do is turn it on. Give it 30 or 40 minutes. While that's going, you need to get Audrey in the bath and then help her with her homework. Her reader is in her bag. Try to get her into bed by 7:30/

CONNOR:

I've got an assignment I need to get to Mr Fitzpatrick by the morning.

DAD:

Connor, this has been scheduled for weeks.

CONNOR:

It's worth 25% of my grade dad!

DAD:

Well, I'm sorry but it's too late to change things around, and you shouldn't be leaving it till the last minute. Why didn't you do it on the weekend?

CONNOR:

I had work all weekend.

DAD:

Well, you're just going to have to pull an all-nighter and get it done.

Put your phone on charge, I want to be able to contact you. Also, remember to feed the dog, water the herbs, and if you can, get the uniforms out of the machine and hang them up.

Oh, and Connor, don't forget to take out both bins.

Connor is staring into space

Did you get all that? Connor!?

Connor snaps out of it

CONNOR:

Yeah. Both bins.

The Toilet Block

DEPUTY CRANE OUTSIDE THE GIRLS TOILETS. JESSE EXITS FROM THE 'GIRLS'.

CRANE:

Woah, woah what's the rush! What do you think you were doing in there?

JESSE:

I think I was taking a piss. Mr Crane.

CRANE:

And you do realise this is a 'girls' toilet?

JESSE:

Yes.

CRANE:

And you do realise you are not a girl?

JESSE:

Well not technically, but/

CRANE:

/Being a male, you are forbidden from using the 'girls' toilets. I don't know if this is some kind of joke/

JESSE:

/It's not a joke. I just don't see what the issue is. It's just a toilet.

CRANE:

Because, there is a very clear order of things you see young man. One for boys, and one for girls. Just like the uniforms, which I know you've had a number of breaches of in recent times.

CRANE POINTS TO THE SIGNS ON THE WALLS OF THE TOILET.

There's even pictures above the door so that even the mentally impaired can understand it. You use the one which you look like.

JESSE:

What do you mean 'the one which I look like'?

CRANE:

The picture that represents you, Jack.

JESSE:

And which of these two pictures would you say represents me sir?

CRANE:

(POINTING TO THE SIGN)

This one.

CRANE MAKES HIS BODY INTO THE RIGID POSE OF THE FIGURE ON THE 'MALE' SIGN.

JESSE:

Right. Because I don't think either of these pictures represent me. I don't feel any more like that picture, than this picture. So, I don't see why I shouldn't be able to use whichever one I want.

CRANE:

Because Jack, like everything in life, a line has to be drawn somewhere. It's for the safety and privacy of the girls...

CRANE STOPS AND WATCHES A FEMALE STUDENT LEAVE THE TOILETS.

CRANE:

I like to watch them leave. Make sure they're safe. (beat) You need to only use the male toilets from now on, Jack.

JESSE:

Would you stop calling me Jack!? It's Jesse.

CRANE:

Is that right? Got your student card there?

JESSE:

What? Why?

CRANE:

Student card!

JESSE:

Seriously?!

CRANE STICKS HIS HAND OUT, EXPECTANTLY. JESSE TAKES HIS STUDENT CARD FROM

HIS POCKET AND HANDS IT TO CRANE. CRANE LOOKS AT THE CARD, THEN HOLDS IT UP FOR JESSE TO SEE.

CRANE:

Read that out for me would you mate.

JESSE:

Jack Price.

CRANE:

Jack Price.

(HANDS HIM HIS CARD BACK)

It'd be very much in your best interests to tow the line from now on. You need to use the correct name, wear the correct uniform, and use the correct toilets. Understand? Don't try to buck the system, Jack.

PHIL'S PHONE CALL

PHIL IS PACING AROUND HIS APARTMENT ON THE PHONE. HE HAS A BOTTLE OF JACK DANIELS IN HIS HAND.

PHIL:

She's my daughter too Sarah, you seem to forget that. She's not one of your shiny possessions that you can just...you don't get to dictate to me!... I'll be getting her from your place tomorrow...Yes I bloody will, try and stop me! Try and stop me. Try and stop me, Sarah. Oh yeah, how?

You what!? Are you serious!? Oh, I thought you were a psycho before but now I know for sure...On what grounds can you get a restraining order!? What bullshit did you feed them to get that through!?

Is that what you were doing today was it, when you weren't answering the phone...or maybe you were busy canoodling with that bag of shit Gary. I tell you what, you'd better not be bringing any other men around Bonny... You're the one that left me!!!

Oh yeah, here we go, I'm such a drunkard!! The world's biggest, drunkest loser ladies and gentlemen!! He's such a train wreck, he can't even see his own daughter, for Christ's sake!!!...I drink so that I can sleep, Sarah. So that I can drown out the shit in my head...What would you know about the accident!! Don't you bloody go there!!!

Yeah, and what good did therapy ever do anyone...let's face it, you just wanted an excuse to get out...Yes you did...remember the vows, Sarah? In sickness and in health? All that? I'm not the one that needs help!

PHIL THROWS THE PHONE.