



*Buttercup*  
Self-care toolkit

“Buttercup” is an honest, insightful and engaging dialogue about a young woman’s life after experiencing abuse as a child. Her story is portrayed through an online live stream performance – a moment for her to release, reflect and process her experience.

The film deals with challenging themes. It uses storytelling and spoken word to explore the long-lasting impacts of sexual abuse in a sensitive and accessible way. The story was written by Dorcas Seb, based on an original idea by Associate Producer Odile Mukete.

“Buttercup” spans both British and Congolese culture – it explores what it feels like to be attached to two different cultures.

Buttercup is a 20 Stories High and Tigerlilly Productions co-production for BBC Arts supported by The Space.



Idlewild Trust



## CONTENT WARNING

Buttercup is based around a character’s experience of child sexual abuse. Although the character is fictional, her story is based on research that includes people’s lived experiences.

Some viewers may find this piece triggering due to this content. Suitable for ages 13 plus.



## Why this toolkit?

This toolkit has been designed to help support individuals in looking after yourself in making the decision to watch Buttercup, as well as during and after watching. We hope this toolkit provides you with specialist resources and tools from the professionals that may help.

Advice taken from The Survivor's Trust blog: Taking Care of yourself & I May Destroy You – find more advice and tips here: <https://bit.ly/3v6rw2H> - this article was created by The Survivor's Trust in order to help viewers in making the choice to watch the TV series I May Destroy You. Although Buttercup has a differing theme (Buttercup explores Child Sexual Abuse and I May Destroy You explores sexual assault and adult relationships) the ideas and tips are relevant for lots of shows and films that may be triggering.

## Tips— how to look after yourself

### **Go at your own pace:**

If you don't want to watch this all at once, maybe consider watching the film a bit at a time. It'll be available on iPlayer for a set amount of time. It's a 45-minute-long film, so you could watch it 15 minutes at a time. Do what feels right for you.

**Watch with someone:** Watching with someone who knows you and any connections you may have to the theme of this film may help when it comes to recognising if you need to switch it off, or if you need support. Or if you can't watch with someone, maybe message someone ahead of watching, and let them know you might call them if you need support.

### **Read a summary of the film:**

If you'd like to know the content before you watch, so that there's nothing unexpected, you'll find at the bottom of this document a full breakdown of the piece.

### **Remember it's your choice:**

Remember it's your choice to watch this film – you're in the driving seat – there should never be any pressure to do so. You are in control, even if you might not feel it. If you're feeling overwhelmed at any point, turn it off and try some grounding techniques.

### **Remember your breath:**

If you become triggered, breathing is a great way to bring yourself back into a state of calm, lower your heart rate and create space in your brain to start thinking things through at an easier pace. 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 until your breath feels in control again. Lots of mobiles & smart watches offer apps which can help you with this.

### **Get some fresh air:**

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

### **Get help:**

If you notice that you've become overwhelmed and the techniques suggested here and/or the ways you usually bring yourself back into a state of calm are not working, then recognise that moment, and consider getting professional support. See p.8 for helplines and organisations offering support.





# Signposting

## Helplines: Sexual Abuse The Survivor's Trust

[www.survivorstrust.org](http://www.survivorstrust.org) / 08088 010818

## RASA (Merseyside only)

[www.rasamerseyside.org](http://www.rasamerseyside.org) / 0151 666 1392

## Not from Merseyside?

Find your local support centre:

<https://www.thesurvivorstrust.org/find-support>

## NAPAC

**(National Association for People Abused in Childhood)**

Email support: [support@napac.org.uk](mailto:support@napac.org.uk)

Phone support: 0808 801 0331

## Helplines: Report it

If you believe someone is at immediate danger, phone the police: 999

Or call Childline (for under 18s): 0800 1111

Or non-emergency police (for over 18s): 101

## Not sure where to turn?

**The Mix offers a wide range of support for young people under the age of 25.**

[www.themix.org.uk](http://www.themix.org.uk) (for 1-2-1 chat and messenger) /  
0808 808 4994

## Useful Apps, Articles and Websites

### Apps:

Hub of Hope

Woebot

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](http://www.napac.org.uk/flashbacks)

### Understanding Flashbacks – what's happening?

<https://www.thesurvivorstrust.org/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=3cbb806f-2e82-44df-8207-2ee8d8567948>

### My Little Book of Coping Methods

<https://www.thesurvivorstrust.org/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=e88ec2e3-3119-4722-8a88-f8421847d64b>

### 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>

### Six guides for Survivors:

help and tools to support survivors created by NAPAC (National Association for People Abused in Childhood)

[https://napac.org.uk/project\\_category/booklets/](https://napac.org.uk/project_category/booklets/)

## Synopsis of the Film

Fortune is a young woman, born in the Democratic Republic of Congo and migrated to Liverpool when she was eight.

The piece begins with Fortune stood in front of a live stream camera, which her friends are setting up. The live stream is nearly ready to start, but just before it does, she texts her Mum to check she's going to be watching. Mum replies that she can't get it to work. Fortune tells her to ask her sister Hope for help.

The live stream starts. She tells the audience she wants to take them on a journey through her personal story. The story starts with her recounting a memory of making a traditional Congolese family dinner. At home, she finds her Mum and sisters have been joined by her gossipy 'aunty' (family friend). Everything feels the same here, as it did in DR Congo. The family dinner is a success, and everyone laughs about how their mum is settling comfortably into Liverpool-life, being a 'proper Scouser'. After dinner, they are watching the TV. An incident of sexual abuse triggers buried memories in Fortune. She talks about how the sound from the TV morphs into white-noise; poetically, she paints the acute, emotional response that she experienced at the time of her own abuse. She remembers struggling against a man in her bedroom, as a child of seven years old in DR Congo, Africa. Buttercup is the name her mum used to call her.

The story moves into another memory. Fortune is with her mother in DRC, shopping for a family dinner. Before the 'uncles' (male family guests) arrive, Fortune recounts her mother warning her to be alert. The piece moves into spoken-word, Fortune remembers a knock at the door. He is here. He whispers and manipulates and threatens her, telling her to respect her elders. She is struggling.

We jump to Christmas 2006, five years after the family migrated. Fortune is arguing with her oldest sister Esther about values from 'back home'. Fortune associates 'back home' with abusive memories and what happened under the family's roof. She is angry at her sister, who doesn't understand and retaliates by telling Fortune to respect her elders. We return to Fortune's memories through poetry, a predator searching for his prey.

Fortune is now in college and recounts her reaction in the moment that a male friend unexpectedly touches her shoulder. She talks about her unease with people getting over familiar. Her mates want her to 'let her guard down'. She can't. Fortune talks about the abusive experience following her, the guilt and the memories clouding over her, ready to thunder. She feels guilt for not getting help and talks about, maybe, it being her fault.



We jump forwards a few years, Fortune is back in Liverpool from university in Bolton, it is Congolese Independence Day. She is at a party dancing with her younger sister Hope, who was wishing that she was back in DR Congo. Hope has very different memories, she remembers the calm, the sun and Fortune 'sneaking about with boys'. Fortune is furious and they have a big argument Fortune performs another poem where she discloses there were multiple abusers and her fear that they could also abuse her little sister.

We move to another memory in the family house in Liverpool with Fortune's 'aunties'. One of the aunties talks about how a pastor has abused a woman. She believes it is the woman's fault. Another aunty turns to Fortune and asks her about her single life and dressing style, she says it is time Fortune thinks about getting married. Fortune is infuriated. When the aunties leave, she questions her mother about not standing up for her. Her mother asks about an 'unprogressive life' and her dressing 'for boys'. Her mother warns about sexual abuse and the dark things that happen in the world. We realise that Fortune's mother has also experienced abuse. Fortune connects with her mother. She sees the same pain. She wants to support her, but she can't. Her heart is beating. She can't speak out. We return to Fortune and her thoughts. She feels 'tampered with'.

We return to the first moment in the story when Fortune was sat with her sisters and her mum watching TV when the sound turns into white-noise. Unexpected memories are triggered which 'hit her too hard'. She leaves the room in tears, followed by Hope. The penny drops for Hope who realises what her sister must have been through. She reassures Fortune that she'll go back in and and stop Mum and Esther asking questions, so she can have the space she needs. Fortune gets in the shower and scrubs her skin and wants the shower to drown out the noise. At first she doesn't want to think or talk about it. This is the moment that Fortune starts to relive her memories. She starts to process what happened, she is no longer trying to forget. She writes poetry for months. She keeps writing.

The story moves to Fortune in church with her mum. It is a lively environment. The pastor talks about the futility of coming to church with a huge amount baggage without letting it go and giving it up to Christ. The pastor says, tell your neighbour 'I am greater than my past because Christ has set me free'. Fortune turns to her mum, they look each other in the eyes, they take each other hands and they repeat his words together.

Fortune checks in with us (the audience). She says it's still a process. We return to poetry we have heard throughout 'Buttercup' about shame and guilt. This time, Fortune talks about letting go of the shame, and not standing alone. She speaks to the camera, and she knows that she does not stand alone. She stands with her mum and with us. We cut to her mum proud and moved, watching the live stream on a tablet. The piece ends with Fortune singing a heartfelt and upbeat verse about healing.





This document was made by 20 Stories High.

For more information please visit  
[www.20storieshigh.org.uk](http://www.20storieshigh.org.uk) or contact us on [email](#)  
or via our social media pages

