



**20 STORIES HIGH** PRESENTS

5 SHORT FILMS • 5 UNIQUE STORIES • 5 REASONS TO WATCH

# TOUCHY

**20 STORIES HIGH**

**#1 JEMELL'S STORY**

*Commissioned by Wellcome Collection  
In association with Unity*

## Self-care toolkit

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# TOUCHY

Five short films, five unique stories, five reasons to watch.

Touchy is a project made by 20 Stories High in collaboration with six Liverpool-based artists. In May 2021, we'll release each film weekly, and they will be available to watch on YouTube and Instagram for a while after. We start with Jemell's story – which this toolkit supports, moving through the weeks to Max's story at the end.

Self-care toolkits are available for all five films (or as one combined toolkit) from our website: [www.20storieshigh.org.uk](http://www.20storieshigh.org.uk)

## About Touchy

A mash up of theatre and music video – interweaving beats, drama, poetry, animation, visuals and original music. We follow the journey of six characters as they navigate their way through the tactile highs and lows of young adulthood.

**Jemell's Story** blends Hip-Hop and storytelling to tell the story of a young Black lad living with undiagnosed autism.

**Jazz's Story** is a tender and uplifting R'n'B love story exploring public displays of affection in a same sex relationship.

**Ella and Ste's Story** investigates consent, with a story that explores the conflicting recollections of an intimate moment from many moons ago.

**Sophie's Story** explores how a young woman renegotiates her relationship with her Grandad Kojo during lockdown.

And finally, in **Max's Story**, a young trans guy guides us through his discoveries around social touch with a funny and heart-warming animation.

Co-created with a multi-talented collection of rappers, singers' actors, poets, beatmakers, writers, visual artists, animators. Touchy offers a unique exploration in the world of touch.

## Content Warning

Jemell's story contains themes of racism, mental health and substance abuse. Also contains strong language and the use of the "N" word. There is a detailed breakdown of what story Jemell tells at the end of this pack, please read it ahead of watching if you'd like some further information.

Suitable for ages 13 plus.

# Why this toolkit?

This toolkit has been designed to offer support to anyone engaging with the film, especially anyone who might be impacted by its content. We hope this toolkit provides you with specialist resources and tools from the professionals that may help.

## 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. Jemell's story is in three parts and is nine minutes long in total. It'll be available on YouTube and Instagram for the next few years at least. 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 the ways you usually bring yourself back into a state of calm, then recognise that moment, and consider getting professional support. See the bottom of this document for helplines and organisations who can 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 our Touchy films have differing themes, the ideas and tips are relevant for lots of shows and films that may be triggering.*

# Signposting

## Helplines: Autism & ADHD

National Autistic Society

[www.autism.org.uk](http://www.autism.org.uk)

Child Autism

[www.childautism.org.uk](http://www.childautism.org.uk)

National Autistic Society School Exclusion helpline

0808 800 4002

Ambitious About Autism

[www.abitiousaboutautism.org.uk](http://www.abitiousaboutautism.org.uk)

Actually Autistic (Facebook forum group)

[www.facebook.com/actuallyautistic](https://www.facebook.com/actuallyautistic)

ADHD Foundation

[www.adhdfoundation.org.uk](http://www.adhdfoundation.org.uk)

0151 541 9020

Support Groups for ADHD

[www.ukadhd.com](http://www.ukadhd.com)

Attention Deficit Disorder Information and Support Service (ADDISS)

[www.addiss.co.uk](http://www.addiss.co.uk)

020 8952 2800

## Helplines: Racism & Inequality

Stop Hate UK

[www.stophateuk.org](http://www.stophateuk.org)

0800 138 1625

Anthony Walker Foundation

[www.anthonywalkerfoundation.com](http://www.anthonywalkerfoundation.com)

0151 237 3974

Victim Support

[www.victimsupport.org.uk](http://www.victimsupport.org.uk)

0808 1689 111

**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:

- Hub of Hope
- Woebot
- Headspace
- Calm

# Synopsis of the Film:

## Jemell's story

Jemell's story is a mix of spoken word and rap, and he speaks in third person throughout the piece.

We start with Jemell performing against a background of plastic bubble wrap, as if in a music video. He is recalling about what it was like growing up for him – noticing that daily tasks and interactions are difficult for him. He starts to realise that he feels 'different' to others – both on the inside and out.

We then see Jemell sat in a stake park, reflecting on his teenage years. He talks about how his 'constant tapping' was annoying to everyone – his family, peers at school and teachers. Jemell highlights one teacher that was different from the rest – Mr Jones – who Jemell felt understood Jemell's needs and could see the potential in Jemell as a musician and creative.

Jemell recalls a moment where Mr Jones gives Jemell an 'SP 404' – which is a small, box-shaped sampler which is used by musicians to create sounds and music. We see many SP 404s rain from the sky visually. Jemell describes the bond he felt with Mr Jones as a result of finally feeling understood by someone.

Jemell talks about how he really took to creating music: 'there was no turning back'. He goes on to talk about how other young people in school would get jealous, and that they couldn't understand Jemell. Jemell talks about how his social interactions with peers became violent – no longer arguing but fighting, which resulted in Jemell being excluded from school. This meant Jemell could no longer use the SP 404 in school, and so he would no longer make music. With nothing positive left for Jemell, he describes how he becomes 'a reckless individual'.

We then seen Jemell back in his music video mode, against a shiny background. The next rap talks about Jemell's struggles after being excluded – his anger problems, family & relationship issues and his substance abuse. Jemell talks about his struggles through a medical assessment – and how he felt that he wasn't fitting the stereotypes that society wanted to place upon him.

We then move to Jemell at the beach. He talks about how this 'reckless' time of his life affected his mental health, causing him to become withdrawn and suffering with depression. We then hear of a turning point in Jemell's life which was his brother moving back home – who was able to help Jemell back in the 'right direction' – helping him to feel understood and confident about his identity and recognising his neurodiversity. With this new support, Jemell tells us about how he got a job in a shop that supports his needs properly, and the difference this had made to him. With the money from his job, Jemell buys himself an SP 404 to make music.

We visually see Jemell live streaming a jam session on his SP404 – creating bouncing hip hop melodic beats. He looks at home and comfortable with where he's at.

Jemell finishes his story by doing a shout to all the high-flying individuals on the spectrum – and reads out a list of celebrities who have been diagnosed or are suspect to have/had autism.

# Further Information

## What is neurodiversity?

Neurodiversity is an umbrella term which helps us define that there are many different ways in which human brains and minds react and work. Neurodiversity is an inclusive term which does not label someone to have a 'problem with their brain', but instead suggests that we are all different. It is often used to represent neurological (brain) conditions such as ADHD, Asperges, Autism, depression, borderline personality disorder, etc.

Neurodiversity advocates to remove the idea that autism, ADHD, dyslexia, etc. require medical intervention to "cure" or "fix" them, and instead promotes support systems such as inclusion-focused services, accommodations, communication and assistive technologies, occupational training, and independent living support.

Being neurodiverse is not a bad thing - our world should adapt and change to suit every person's needs, so although there are lots of 'negative' associations with being neurodiverse, there are lots of great qualities which should be celebrated and respected. With the right support neurodiverse people can thrive in their surroundings. There are many famous innovators, entrepreneurs, chefs, comedians, actors, writers, directors in this world – the list goes on!

## What is Autism?

Being autistic does not mean you have an illness or disease, it means your brain works in a different way from other people. Autism is a lifelong brain diagnosis which affects how people communicate and interact with the world. One in 100 people are on the autism spectrum.

Autism is a spectrum - this means everybody with autism is different. Some autistic people need little or no support, others may need help from a parent or carer every day.

People with autism people may:

- Need to find a different way to communicate and interact with other people that feels comfortable for them
- Not always immediately understand how other people think or feel
- Need to avoid places that use bright lights or loud noises as these may be overwhelming, stressful or uncomfortable
- Find unfamiliar places or settings uncomfortable
- Need additional support to understand information

## What is ADHD?

Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is a condition that affects people's behaviour. Common tendencies of ADHD tend to be noticed at an early age and may become more noticeable when a child's circumstances change, such as when they start school.

ADHD is sometimes referred to as ADD (taking out the hyperactivity) as hyperactivity is not a definitive characteristic of someone who may have an attention deficit disorder.

Some barriers that may arise in day-to-day life include:

- getting to sleep at night
- getting ready for school or work on time
- listening to and remembering a set of instructions
- find it difficult to remain organised

## **How does ADHD affect adults?**

In adults, the symptoms of ADHD are more difficult to define. This is largely due to a lack of research into adults with ADHD. As ADHD is a developmental disorder, it's believed it cannot develop in adults without it first appearing during childhood.

By the age of 25, an estimated 15% of people diagnosed with ADHD as children still have a full range of symptoms, and 65% still have some symptoms that affect their daily lives – others may have found strategies or coping mechanisms that work for them in order to work with their ADHD in a productive way. Adult symptoms of ADHD also tend to be far more subtle than childhood symptoms.

Some specialists have suggested the following as a list of symptoms associated with ADHD in adults:

- carelessness and lack of attention to detail
- continually starting new tasks before finishing old ones
- poor organisational skills
- inability to focus or prioritise
- continually losing or misplacing things
- forgetfulness
- restlessness and edginess
- difficulty keeping quiet, and speaking out of turn
- blurting out responses and often interrupting others
- mood swings, irritability and a quick temper
- inability to deal with stress
- extreme impatience
- taking risks in activities, often with little or no regard for personal safety or the safety of others – for example, driving dangerously

## **What does it mean to have autism and be a person of colour?**

There is a lack of research about the experience of autistic people of colour. But we know from research by the [National Autistic Society](#) that it can be even harder for children and young people who are people of colour to get a diagnosis and access support.

Many families who are people of colour may struggle to engage with local autism groups due to a number of reasons:

- a lack of representation – particularly from those who facilitate the group
- a language barrier, which means they may be misunderstood and have no one to translate
- not finding families that look like them, and not being able to discuss issues related to their culture and/or religion.

It is often the case that institutional racism (which stereotypes and allows people to make assumptions about people of colour) can categorise people of colour as 'lazy' or 'inattentive' as opposed to acknowledging that this may be a neurological condition in which a person should get support for.



## **What can I do to support someone with a neurodiversity?**

There is no set way to support people who are neurodiverse, every individual should be treated as such as you should work with an individual to understand what might help them. Some steps you can take are:

- Take time to listen: make sure you communicate with someone who is neurodiverse to better understand their requirements. Do your best to make sure you work to achieve their needs.
- Keep communication going: if something isn't possible, let the person know, and see if there's any alternatives you can look at together
- Try not to use negative (or 'deficit') language: it is not someone's fault that they are neurodiverse – try to acknowledge specific characteristics of someone's neurodiversity in a way that won't make them feel bad, or guilty for their requirements. Recognise the strengths that neurodiverse people have.
- Find training: if you're working professionally with neurodiverse people, you should seek appropriate training to better understand how you/your workplace can adapt. A great place to start is the ADHD Foundation.

*Info taken from:*

*Autism.org.uk / NHS England / understood.org / ADHD Foundation*





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