



*Commissioned by Wellcome Collection
In association with Unity
Supported by John Ellerman Foundation*

Self-care toolkit

**wellcome
collection**

John Ellerman
Foundation

UNITY

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**, 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

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.

About Sophie's Story

Sophie's Story explores how a young woman renegotiates her relationship with her Grandad Kojo during lockdown. Sophie's story is performed by Anita Welsh. The animation and illustrations have been created by Amber Akaunu and Joe Harper.

About Anita Welsh

Anita is a mother, poet and writer who creates: not only life but art to share with her child, as well as other children and families. She uses writing and poetry to spark imaginations and encourage playful synergy between little ones and their parents. This aim to offer high quality work and activities grows from a personal experience of a lack of exciting, inclusive artistic opportunities that bring families together.

Anita is currently developing a book for children that she hopes will be a refreshing collection of new nursery rhymes that are diverse, accessible and current. Recent projects include: Artistic Collaboration with Squash on their 'Sign of the Times' exhibition on Windsor Street L8, Story Building Associate at 20 Stories High, Toast & Jam, a 16-week project of creative play sessions delivered for 20 Stories High; Community Engagement Associate for Big Up!, a 20 Stories High and Theatre-Rites co-production and work with Liverpool Cultural Education Partnership.

Other Touchy Stories

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 many moons ago.

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 and animators. Touchy offers a unique exploration in the world of touch.

Content Overview

Sophie's story explores family relationships, COVID-19 lockdown and how the pandemic has impacted families. There is a detailed breakdown of what story they tell at the end of this pack, please read it ahead of watching if you would like 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 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. Sophie's story is told through a gentle, spoken poem and is ten 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 would like to know the content before you watch, so that there is nothing unexpected, you will find a full breakdown of the piece at the bottom of this document.
- **Remember it is your choice:** Remember it is your choice to watch this film – you are in the driving seat. There should never be any pressure to do otherwise. You are in control, even if you might not feel it. If you are feeling overwhelmed at any point, turn the film 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 and 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 have become overwhelmed - and the techniques suggested here or techniques that usually bring you calm have not this time - then you recognise that 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

Young Minds

www.youngminds.org.uk

Young Minds are leading the fight for a future where all young minds are supported and empowered, whatever the challenges.

MIND

www.mind.org.uk

0300 123 3393

MIND provide advice and support to empower anyone experiencing a mental health problem. They campaign to improve services, raise awareness, and promote understanding.

MIND COVID-19 Support Services

www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus/

MIND provides reliable information and tips to help you cope during this time.

SupportLine

www.supportline.org.uk

01708 765200

SupportLine offers confidential, emotional support and is particularly aimed at those who are isolated, at risk or vulnerable and victims of any form of abuse.

AgeUK

www.ageuk.org.uk

0800 678 1602 (Free to call 8am – 7pm, 365 days a year)

AgeUK offer advice and guidance, help millions of people to know their rights, tackle loneliness, get older people active, and support people to stay independent for longer.

Childline

www.childline.org.uk

0800 1111

Childline supports anyone under 19 in the UK with any issue that they are going through. They can talk about anything - whether it's something big or small, our trained counsellors are here to listen and support.

NHS 111

www.111.nhs.uk/covid-19

111

The government Coronavirus Helpline. Check if you have Coronavirus symptoms, how to avoid catching or spreading the virus and 'stay at home' information.

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 (for 1-2-1 chat and messenger)

0808 808 4994

Useful apps:

- Hub of Hope
- Woebot
- Headspace
- Calm

Synopsis of the Film:

Sophie's story

Sophie's Story explores how a young woman renegotiates her relationship with her Grandad Kojo during the COVID-19 lockdown.

The film begins with a variety of illustrations and artwork which relate in some way to Sophie and her world. Soft, slow music is playing. The film moves to a woman, sat on a red chair, reading from a book. We see the words she is reading on the left-hand side of the page. She narrates a poem about Sophie and talks of how lockdown has changed plans and caused feelings of isolation and loneliness. An illustration of a landscape of a starry night, clouds, and event tickets are shown and the narrator talks about how the plan for 2020 was to take Kojo on a surprise trip to Africa.

The story returns to the narrator sat in chair. She talks about Sophie as a key worker and highlights that her favourite person has always been her grandad – Kojo. The film moves to an illustration of the world, spinning, and then an illustration of Sophie and Kojo as they look up at the sky. Love hearts soon fill the screen as we hear more about their close and special relationship. Sophie spent more time with Kojo than at home.

We hear that Kojo moved from Ghana to Liverpool at the age of eighteen, images of old photos from Ghana that Kojo used to show Sophie come up, the same images which inspired Sophie to book a surprise return trip in 2020. We return to the narrator, who explains that due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the surprise trip to Africa became a no go. The narrator talks about an even bigger challenge due to the pandemic - being separated from her beloved Kojo. We see the illustration of Sophie and Kojo on the screen, arms coming out to touch each other but in their separate colourful boxes they are unable to make contact and Kojo walks away. The narrator talks about how Sophie and Kojo must stop their secret handshakes and hugs, due to social distancing. They both felt abandoned and lonely.

We return back to the narrator as the soft, gentle music returns. The narrator talks about Sophie's job looking after elderly people, and this was hard as she had different rules at work to the rules applied to her and her own Grandad. The narrator talks about Sophie turning to journaling to help her work through her emotions. An image of a piece of paper, with words being written on, appears. Sophie is writing about the weight of lockdown. She is feeling introverted, and low. Sometimes she doesn't know how to feel. Sophie's writing book becomes her best friend – a non-judgemental space that offers Sophie healing. Kojo's window boxes become his space for healing. An illustration of a window, with small plants growing in the window box, is shown on screen with Kojo watching out the window. The plants on the screen have blossomed into purple flowers.

The screen returns to the narrator in her chair and she talks about how neither Sophie or Kojo can talk about how they are feeling – but Sophie takes the time to write Kojo a letter and posts it through his letterbox.

The narrator reads the letter that Sophie has written to her grandad as the words appear on screen. Soft, gentle music plays, and we hear the sound of rain. Sophie talks about how angry she feels and that she feels disconnected to her grandad. She asks him to propose a solution to what they are both experiencing. The narrator talks about how Kojo read the letter, and instantly wanted to reach out to Sophie. An image of a mobile and the text message that Kojo has written to Sophie appears. He talks about how much he misses her, but that they will get through this and see each other soon. This message is all that Sophie has needed to brighten her day. The narrator talks about how Sophie instantly feels better.

The film moves back to the narrator, she talks about how Sophie feels uplifted and inspired to send a care package to Kojo. A drawing of a brown box comes up on the screen, filled with gifts. The narrator talks about how Sophie drops the box on the doorstep for Kojo and wants to reach out to hug him. Kojo cries when he sees Sophie, and she briefly hugs him for comfort – how she couldn't help it despite the restrictions.

The story finishes hearing that Sophie visited Kojo every week for doorstep visits, and they learnt how to hold and comfort each other without touch through covid. Light, hopeful music plays in the background as an illustration of Sophie's journal reappears – with drawings of sunshine, a photograph of Kojo and a drawing of Kojo and Sophie when Sophie was a little girl.

Further Information

How has the COVID-19 pandemic affected relationships with our families?

The coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic is affecting all our lives. For many of us, it has placed extreme restrictions on freedom of movement and significant stress on people living in difficult home-life situations or on informal caregivers to family living outside of their home. A recent survey of children and young people revealed that the two most difficult aspects of coronavirus have been being unable to see friends (37%) and being unable to see family (30%). Everyone will have experienced the pandemic differently and our relationships with family and friends may have changed, but that does not mean that they have changed forever. Some people may have experienced death in their family and been unable to be at their loved one's side, attend funeral gatherings or manage their bereavement. Finding time to talk about the different feelings and emotions that we have experienced during the pandemic can be difficult. It is important to find a way that works for you and your family – for example writing a letter or watching a film to start the conversation.

How has the COVID-19 pandemic affected the older population, or those who have needed to isolate?

The COVID-19 pandemic has been a worrying time for everyone and especially those who are elderly, those who experience physical or mental health problems, or people who live alone. During the pandemic, the Government said that older people and people with long-term health conditions are more vulnerable and therefore must isolate. Because of this, many people have struggled with meeting their physical and mental needs. Loneliness in particular has affected the older population, especially because it can be really difficult for someone to admit that they are feeling lonely (and even harder to ask for help). Pride and independence are important for a lot of us, but these things can feel even more important as we get older. We all go through ups and downs but there are some clues that could indicate a person is feeling lonely, these include someone:

- having a significant change in their routine (e.g., getting up a lot later)
- neglecting their appearance or personal hygiene
- not eating properly
- putting themselves down
- not being themselves

You may spot signs that someone is lonely before the person you care about does, or before they are able to talk about it. It can be hard to admit that you think someone you care about is lonely and it can bring up feelings of guilt, confusion, or shame – especially during the pandemic when we have had very little control. However, by recognising that someone is lonely, you can start to help them (See signposting page for further information on this).

How can I transition out of 'lockdown'?

In full lockdown things might have felt more certain or predictable because the rules were clearer. But now that lockdown restrictions are easing things might feel less clear, and there may be new challenges. It can feel stressful when things are changing and there will be no 'normal' response to these changes. Your feelings may be affected by lots of things that are out of your control and they might change on a day-to-day basis. Some feelings that you might experience include:

- Anxious, afraid or panicked
- Angry or frustrated
- Conflicted or confused
- Stressed or unprepared
- A sense of grief or loss
- Reluctant, unmotivated or low and tired
- Lonely or isolated
- Uneasy about relationships

- Distrustful
- A sense of injustice

It is important to remember that you are not alone in managing difficult feelings. You don't need to force yourself to 'start again' immediately – it is OK to need to take time to readjust. Here are some ideas of how you can do that:

- Get practical support from organisations
- Talk to someone you trust
- Try online peer support
- Express your feelings creatively
- Make choices to control the things you can
- Practice self-care techniques regularly, such as breathing exercises or meditation

Information taken from SupportLine, MIND, Age UK, the 'Life on Hold: children's well-being and Covid-19' Report (2020)

wellcome collection **UNITY** John Ellerman Foundation



Supported by
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**

phf Paul Hamlyn
Foundation



Liverpool
City Council

