

**MORTAL  
FOOLS**

ENSEMBLE YOUNG COMPANY PRESENTS...

This resource is to complement our **Ensemble Young Company Presents** film project and is for anyone working with young people 11–25yrs old - youth workers, teachers, theatre practitioners and parents/carers - to help them explore the themes of anxiety & family relationships.

# RESOURCE PACK

**This is what it  
feels like...**



## INTRODUCTION TO ENSEMBLE YOUNG COMPANY PRESENTS...

Following the success of *Brainstorm* in Spring 2025, we were inspired to delve even deeper into the connections between young people and the adults around them, looking at what makes these relationships uplifting and, at times, what makes them challenging for everyone involved.

Across Summer 2025, our Ensemble Young Company set out to create two short films tackling some of the barriers young people face today.

Filmed entirely on an iPhone (a creative challenge in itself), the films are intended to help start conversations with young people.

## FILM #1:

When anxiety strikes,  
an internal battle begins...



## FILM #2:

Two worlds disconnected...  
can we bridge the gap?

**We have created this Resource Pack to help you explore the films' ideas, themes and characters with young people in your life.**

Communicating feelings and needs can be challenging for many people. For teenagers, things can feel even trickier. As their brains develop and their lives change, they start to become more independent from their caregivers and lean more on their friends. This shift in relationships and growing sense of freedom make navigating this stage of life both exciting and sometimes confusing. It's in this context, these films exist and we hope they spark conversations about youth experiences and how adults can better support them...

---

## BEFORE STARTING

### *To start off...*

...it may be helpful to watch our Sparked videos - our educational and practice sharing video series about co-creation with children and young people.

The series demonstrates the ways we have worked with our young people to co-create the two Ensemble Young Company Presents films, including some examples of activities that you might like to try in your sessions with young people. In the series we share elements of creative process - the tasks and activities we do to create new pieces of work - and the relational process - how we work together, and the environment we create.

[You can watch our Sparked videos HERE.](#)

---

## NOTE:

Some of the subjects and themes that come up when exploring these themes may be challenging or uncomfortable - that is ok! We encourage you to remind any young people you're using this resource pack with, to only explore and share what they are comfortable exploring.

We have listed some mental health support services in a resource you can download [HERE](#) which may be useful to sign-post young people to.

LET'S GO...

ENSEMBLE YOUNG COMPANY PRESENTS...

## GETTING TO KNOW YOU

We always find it helpful to invest time with your group to get to know each other before starting to explore any sort of personal experiences or opinions.

These are some of the prompts we used with our Ensemble Young Company cast:

- If you really knew me, you would know...
- If I was on Britain's Got Talent, my talent would be...
- If I was to cook you my specialty dish, it would be...
- A song I think you should listen to is...

*You might also like playing games like:*

### ANYONE WHO

#### SET UP REQUIRED:

Each participant on a chair in a circle facing each other, with one person standing without a chair in the circle. *(There should be one less chair than there are players.)*

#### HOW TO PLAY:

- One person stands in the middle of the circle and says a statement starting with "Anyone Who..." and ending with something that is true about themselves.
- If the statement is true for someone else, they must find a different seat in the circle. The person in the middle must also try and sit on a seat in the circle.
- Whoever is left in the middle gives the next "Anyone Who..." statement, and the game continues.

### 2 TRUTHS AND A LIE

#### HOW TO PLAY:

- Everyone shares 3 statements with the group. 2 of them are true about themselves and 1 of them is a lie.
- The rest of the group must guess which statement was a lie.

# WORKING TOGETHER

ENSEMBLE YOUNG COMPANY PRESENTS...

An important part of how we work at Mortal Fools is to establish and develop trust within the group. It's important to recognise that trust is something that takes time to develop but makes a huge difference once you have established it.

*Below are some creative tasks we use to build trust and togetherness within Ensemble Young Company that you could try:*

## YES!

### SET UP REQUIRED:

Standing in a circle facing each other with 1 ball to use for the task

### HOW TO PLAY:

- **Start Simple:** One person stands in the middle with the ball. They throw it to someone in the circle, who throws it back. The middle player keeps passing the ball to people around the circle until everyone has had a turn.
- **Add "YES!":** Now, while the ball is being passed, anyone in the circle can shout "YES!". When this happens, the person in the middle steps out and takes a spot in the circle, while the person who shouted "YES!" moves into the middle and takes over catching and throwing the ball to people around the circle.
- **Final Challenge:** This time, after three passes from the middle, the person in the middle leaves without anyone saying "YES!". Another person must step in smoothly, take over, and continue.
- The goal is to create a flowing rhythm where players constantly swap in and out of the middle without words.

### PURPOSE:

This game builds teamwork, quick reactions, and non-verbal communication. Mistakes are expected – if the ball drops, just pick it up and keep going.



## THE QUICK BROWN FOX JUMPS OVER THE LAZY DOG

### SET UP REQUIRED:

- Standing in a circle facing each other
- (Optional) The phrase “The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog” printed out or written up on flipchart paper/whiteboard for everyone to see

### HOW TO PLAY:

- Each person is given one (or more) letters of the alphabet to remember.
- Together, the group keeps a steady 4-beat rhythm:
  - 1 = Stamp
  - 2 = Clap
  - 3 = Click
  - 4 = Clap
- The group spells out the sentence “The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog.” one letter at a time.
- On every Click (beat 3), the next person says their letter aloud.
- When it’s a space, everyone says “space” together on the click.
- If someone misses their letter, pause and restart from the beginning. The goal is to get through the whole sentence without mistakes.

### PURPOSE:

This game encourages persistence, teamwork, and focus. Mistakes are expected, but trying again together builds confidence and connection. The shared rhythm also creates a strong sense of belonging and group energy.

## SHUFFLE MONSTER

### SET UP REQUIRED:

Each person places a chair spread out in the room, facing different directions. Make sure there is space around each chair (not too close to other chairs or other objects in the room).

### HOW TO PLAY:

- One player stands up, leaving their chair empty, and goes to the furthest corner from the empty chair. They are the Shuffle Monster.
- The Shuffle Monster announces: “I am the Shuffle Monster, and I like to shuffle!” and begins shuffling their feet toward the empty chair. The Shuffle Monster’s aim is to sit in the empty chair.
- For everyone sitting, their aim is to stop the Shuffle Monster sitting down. To do this, you must move quickly, one at a time, to sit in the empty chair. This leaves a new empty chair for the Shuffle Monster to try and sit in.
- Remember that once you leave your chair, you must move. You can’t stand up, change your mind, and sit straight back down in the same seat!
- If the Shuffle Monster reaches and sits in the empty chair, they win the round. A new Shuffle Monster is then chosen.

### PURPOSE:

This game builds awareness, focus, and quick decision-making. Players must pay attention to both the empty chair and each other’s movements, encouraging anticipation and teamwork. It also adds a playful challenge that helps groups energize, bond, and practice reacting under pressure.

# WATCHING THE FILMS & CREATIVE TASKS

For each of our two films, we've included a bit of information about what the film explores, and then some creative tasks to complete. The aim of the films and the tasks is that they start conversations with you and your young people about the subject of the films. We're asking you and your young people to reflect on how your experiences are linked to what you've watched, and what things you might want to do, change, or ask for to help with any challenges you recognise.

ENSEMBLE YOUNG COMPANY PRESENTS...

*For each task, we explain why we've included it, what materials you need, and how to complete the task.  
Feel free to adapt tasks as needed to fit your needs and the young people you are working with.*

## FILM #1:



ENSEMBLE YOUNG COMPANY PRESENTS...

## THIS IS WHAT IT FEELS LIKE

*When anxiety strikes,  
an internal battle begins...*

That restless feeling you just can't shake. The weight in your stomach. The sense that something's about to go wrong, lurking just out of sight.

Anxiety hits all of us sometimes –but for so many young people, it's like an annoying shadow that just won't leave them alone. Ensemble Young Company made this film to encourage young people to talk about their feelings with those around them and understand how they can help others who might need it.

-----

### BEFORE STARTING...

This film explores what it feels like to experience anxiety as a young person. The film depicts an anxiety spiral and panic. It's important to make sure the group understand this is what the film is about before watching together, so no one is caught off guard. It also might be that not everyone feels able to watch the film at the same time, for example if someone is feeling more anxious that day.

We have provided suggestions of ways to explore this topic in a way that promotes safety and wellbeing, but this is a topic that is potentially triggering for a lot of young people, so please take care of your young people and yourself as the adult holding those conversations. We have a selection of mental health resources that might also be useful [HERE](#).

### AFTER STARTING...

Check how everyone is doing. If there are some heightened emotions with your young people, you might want to guide everyone through a grounding exercise such as **Box Breathing** (breathe in for a count of 4, hold for 4, breathe out for 4, hold for 4, and repeat) or **squeezing and releasing** different body parts (hands, shoulders, face). Remember that to release emotional tension, you have to do something physical - so a shake off might be just what is needed!

Once everyone is calm and ready to continue, we have 3 suggested tasks for you to try. Feel free to mix and match what will work best with your group!



ENSEMBLE YOUNG COMPANY PRESENTS...

## TASK #1: IN AMAAYA'S SHOES

This activity helps young people explore how anxiety can feel, what triggers it, and how it can be managed. By working through a character's experience, they can reflect safely on these themes and talk about healthy coping strategies.

### SET UP REQUIRED:

- Pen and paper for each person
- Art materials
- Before beginning, explain to the group that this task focuses on Amaaya, a character in the film, and her experiences. Participants may use their own feelings to guide their work, but sharing anything personal is optional

### WHAT TO DO:

- Fold your paper in half, then in half again. Unfold the paper and you should now have 4 squares to work in.
- Draw or write your response to these prompts, each in a different square:
  - Square 1:** How Amaaya feels when her worries take over (e.g., storm cloud, shrinking room).
  - Square 2:** Things that might cause Amaaya's anxiousness to grow.
  - Square 3:** Things that might help Amaaya's anxiousness to shrink.\*
  - Square 4:** How Amaaya feels when her emotions are under control (e.g., sunny landscape, calm bedroom).

“EVERYONE FEELS  
ANXIOUS SOMETIMES.  
BUT IF SOMETIMES  
BECOMES ALL THE TIME,  
THAT'S A PROBLEM.”

\* You might want to share the NHS 5 steps to mental wellbeing as ways that Amaaya could help shrink her anxiousness:

- 1 - Connect with other people
- 2 - Be physically active
- 3 - Learn new skills
- 4 - Give to others
- 5 - Pay attention to the present moment (mindfulness)

You can find more information about these [HERE](#).



## TASK #2: LETTER TO THE CAUSE

This activity focuses on Amaaya's experiences in the film to safely explore strategies for managing anxiety. By naming and addressing the challenges directly, young people can begin to identify practical solutions and take ownership of coping strategies in their own lives.

### SET UP REQUIRED:

- Pen and paper for each person

### WHAT TO DO:

- Choose one thing from the film that makes Amaaya's anxiety grow (e.g. exams, friendships)
- Imagine you are Amaaya. Write a short letter directly to that thing that is causing stress. In your letter, explain:
  - > Why this thing is causing you stress
  - > What you wish could be different about it
  - > What you can do differently to help manage your reaction to it

### SHARING (OPTIONAL):

- Each person reads out their letter, and the group discusses common themes and how to support each other with these.
- *(Extension)* Create a group manifesto for change! Include changes or actions that individuals would like to make for themselves, and include changes or actions that will help support others.

"1 IN 5 YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE A PROBABLE MENTAL HEALTH CONDITION. AND EVEN THOUGH LOADS OF PEOPLE ARE STRUGGLING, IT CAN FEEL REALLY ISOLATING."

## TASK #3: ROLE ON THE WALL - AMAAYA'S CONTROL

This activity helps young people distinguish between what is within their control and what is not. By visually mapping internal and external factors, they can reflect on how to manage emotions, seek support, and respond effectively to challenges.

This task could be completed individually or as a whole group.

### SET UP REQUIRED:

- Pen and paper for each person, OR
- Flipchart paper and marker pen

### WHAT TO DO:

- Draw a large outline of a person (like a gingerbread figure), with enough space to write inside and outside the shape.
- **Inside the figure:** Write or draw things Amaaya can control (e.g. what time she wakes up before her exam)
- **Outside the figure:** Write or draw things Amaaya cannot control (e.g. her friends choosing to go out without her)
- Discuss as a group what can help Amaaya make positive changes to things she can control, and what can help her let go of things she can't control.

## FILM #2:



ENSEMBLE YOUNG COMPANY PRESENTS...

## (DIS)CONNECTED

*Two worlds disconnected...  
can we bridge the gap?*

Ever feel like talking to adults is like crossing into another universe? Sometimes it's nobody's fault. Other times... well, it's complicated. We're worlds apart, and no one's got the translation guide.

Ensemble Young Company created this film to explore the relationships we have with our parents through creating fictional characters. We know that talking to each other is important and it can be really positive, but sometimes it's really hard.

**But here's the real question:  
can it get any better?**

### BEFORE STARTING...

This film is all about the different relationships young people have with the adults they live with and what challenges there are in communicating with each other. Some of the interactions are positive, some are negative, and all have some form of conflict. Prepare your young people to look out for what is challenging and how both the adult and the young person might have a role to play in those challenges.

### AFTER STARTING...

Ask your young people what they thought about the film.

Did any of the scenarios feel familiar? Do they see themselves in any of the characters?

Get ready to complete some creative tasks to explore the different relationships these characters have.



## TASK #1: CONVERSATION CREATORS

This task helps young people explore real experiences of misunderstanding and connection in a safe, creative way.

By turning these moments into short, fictional scripts, they gain distance from the situation while still expressing their perspective. It encourages reflection, empathy, and ownership of their voice.

### SET UP REQUIRED:

- Pen and paper for each person

### WHAT TO DO:

#### ■ BRAINSTORMING

- For 1 minute: write as many examples as you can of conversations teenagers have with adults that make them feel *misunderstood*.
- For 1 minute: write as many examples as you can of conversations teenagers have with adults that make them feel *connected*.

#### ■ CHOOSE AND SCRIPT

- Pick one example for each list. You're going to turn each one into a short piece of script.
- For your first example, write a script that is either 6 words, 2 lines, 6 lines, or 10 lines long.  
*> Top tip! Don't waste lines on small talk or greetings, e.g. "hello". Focus your scene on the most interesting moment of conversation.*
- For your second example, write a script of a different length than your first one, either 6 words, 2 lines, 6 lines, or 10 lines long.

### SHARING (OPTIONAL):

- Perform or read aloud the conversations with a partner, OR,
- Discuss what ideas and scenarios came up from writing the scenes.

-----

"TALKING TO ADULTS IS HARD. IT'S NOT ALWAYS THEIR FAULT (SOMETIMES IT IS) BUT THEY JUST DON'T GET IT. OR THEIR BUSY, OR OVERBEARING, OR WE JUST DON'T WANT THEM IN OUR SPACE. SOMETIMES WE CAN GET THROUGH AND ACTUALLY UNDERSTAND EACH OTHER, AND SOMETIMES WE CAN'T..."



## TASK #2: ALTERNATIVE ENDINGS

This task helps young people spot both positive and negative interaction patterns in a safe, fictional context. By analysing characters' choices, they can reflect on what builds or blocks connection - and start applying these insights to their own relationships with adults.

### SET UP REQUIRED:

- Pen and paper for each person
- Script extracts, printed or viewable digitally (available [HERE](#))

### WHAT TO DO:

- Read the script extracts and:  
*(this can be done individually, or as a group)*
  - **Circle** any lines where a character is trying to connect.
  - **Underline** any lines where a character pulls away from connection.
  - **Add notes** about what could have been said or done differently to make the interaction more positive.
- Discuss what you highlighted and why you think it matters.
- Share ideas about how the scene could have ended more positively and how characters could have behaved in different ways to achieve this.

## TASK #3: WHAT GETS IN THE WAY?

This activity encourages reflection on what disrupts the connection between young people and adults. By listing and then visualising these challenges, participants can uncover both obvious and hidden obstacles, sparking honest conversations about how communication might be improved.

### SET UP REQUIRED:

- Pen and paper for each person
- Art materials

### WHAT TO DO:

- **List:** Write 10 things that get in the way of communicating with adults. These can be things *young people* do or things *adults* do.
- **Respond:** Pick the one that feels most interesting and create a visual representation of it. Use whatever materials you have—there's no wrong way to do this.
- **Share:** Show others what you've created and explain what you've been thinking about as you've made your creation. This could be done formally once everyone has created something, or through casual conversation while everyone creates their own art.
- **Repeat:** If your session allows it, you could get the group to create another representation of something else on their list.

## THANK YOU FOR WATCHING AND ENGAGING WITH OUR FILMS

Empowering and amplifying young people's voices is an important part of what we do, so by taking time out to watch the films and by listening to our young people, you helped us on that mission!

If you found any of the themes explored in the films a bit tricky, we'd like to highlight our Wellbeing Resource. Team Mortal Fools has pulled together this downloadable resource to signpost to a wide variety of wellbeing and mental health support organisations, friends of Mortal Fools, inspirational influencers, courageous activists, and colourful content creators.

[You can download our wellbeing resource HERE.](#)

Please keep in touch with us at Mortal Fools - we'd love to hear how you get on using the resource and what you think of the films; we're always happy to chat, connect and share best practice!

### KEEP IN TOUCH WITH US VIA:

- [Joining our mailing list to keep up to date with all things Mortal Fools](#)
- Following us on social media - we are @mortalfoolsuk across all channels.
- Subscribing to our [YouTube Channel](#)
- Reaching out to us to chat via: [young.people@mortalfools.org.uk](mailto:young.people@mortalfools.org.uk)

Follow us on:



@mortalfoolsUK

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



Arts Council  
ENGLAND



Community  
Foundation

Catherine  
Cookson  
Charitable Trust

Supported by  
Children  
in Need

Promise  
Awards



Northumberland  
County Council

Hays Travel  
FOUNDATION