Icarus F**ked Up

Dear Teachers,
We have put a lot of thought into how to structure an English lesson after a show about mental health issues. This is a dynamic process and we are still working on it. We are also very aware that our teachers are people too. Who also may or may not have personal or close experiences with mental health issues.
That may make it easier or more difficult to take a group of teenagers to a show about this theme and do a lesson on it afterwards.
We have tried to give a range of examples and suggestions for different levels of English and ages. A year 11 class who comes to the show will be able to reflect differently in English than a year 8 class. We would encourage a group exercise/discussion rather than individual hand-outs for the after-show lesson. Or a combination. This will help students who have difficulty articulating themselves in English (or at all) be able to listen to other stronger pupils and still be able to digest what they have seen rather than being left alone with their thoughts.

We also suggest putting as much information, vocabulary, questions etc. on the board rather than as a hand-out or in combination. This is a very subtle but effective way of helping break down the barrier of talking openly about mental health.

Sometimes we need a bit of distance or a new perspective to be able to see a problem from a different angle or take it out of the context of our day to day lives. This is also one reason why we decided to use puppets in the show. Another possibility is to talk about it in another language. As difficult as it might be for some students to talk in English in general, sometimes hearing about or discussing difficult topics in another language allows us a natural and necessary distance that can be very helpful.

We strongly suggest getting all kids at the end of the lesson, or on the way home from the show to get out their phones out if they have them and get them to save one of the numbers in yellow into their phones. We also suggest writing an email to the parents with the numbers in Blue or giving them out at the next parent teacher night. Tell them about the show that the class has gone and seen with a link to our website so they can engage the kids in a conversation. As parents ourselves we also know that sometimes we are clutching at straws to know how to strike up a conversation with our teenagers. ☺

Jugendnotdienst: 030 - 61 00 62 / Nummer gegen Kummer – Jugendtelefon: 11 6 111

Neuhland: 030 - 8730 111 / u25-deutschland.de und youth-life-line.de.

Nummer gegen Kummer – Elterntelefon: 0800 111 0550 / Neuhland: 030 - 8730 111

Yours sincerely and safely
Rachel Pattison
Artistic Director – Platypus Theater

AFTER-SHOW MATERIAL - Icarus F**ked Up

Make a list of the characters in the play with the class on the board. Get the back row kids be the ones to write them down. Talk as a class about what everyone remembers from the story. Write keywords on the board. If there are questions, the students should try and answer them as a group or leave some unanswered for everyone to think about.

For the Students: Re-tell the story in your own words. (ca. Half a page)

Some vocabular for Students that might need help:
Trouble, Help, Struggle, Vision, Fainting, Pressure, Breathe, Anxiety, Counsellor, Worried, Annoyed / annoying, Give up, Feeling, Alone, Escape

HELPING:

We talked a lot about "help or helping" in the play. Like in German, the English word help can be used in many different ways.
Here are some common English phrases using the word help: what could they mean…

(Teachers - Either with or without suggestions)

1. You can't help yourself, can you?	Bediene dich / Nimm ruhig
2. Help yourself!	Kann man nichts machen
3. Help out	Hilfeschrei
4. Can't be helped	Ich kann nichts dafür
5. Cry for help	Mit anpacken
6. Beyond help	Warum machst du das so?
7. I can't help it	Nicht mehr zu retten

For younger or "less adept" students.

Complete the sentence with your own words. It does not have to be related to the play.

Can you help me to/with…..
I can't come, I have to help…… with …..
I need help with my….
Think of 3 more sentences using the word help.

ALL GRADES

Read the scene together with Sam and Nigel outside with Ms Simpson talking to the councellor.

SCENE 20 - SPLIT UP / CONFIDING

Teacher calling Counsellor (SCHOOL) & Nigel finds Sam (PLAYGROUND).

NIGEL Hey Sam!
SAM Hey.
NIGEL I've been looking for you.

COUNSELLOR Hello, School Counselors Office.
MS SIMPSON Hi, This is Mrs Simpson, I'm calling about a student of mine, Sam Wilkinson.

NIGEL You didn't do your presentation…
SAM Had a headache. Really bad one.

MS SIMPSON I'm really worried about Sam. He missed a presentation today. It was his biggest grade for the semester.

NIGEL I've got some good news, Ms. Simpson made sure that you have one more chance to do the presentation. Tomorrow. The examiner was like NO! And then Ms. Simpson was like Yes! No! Yes!

COUNSELLOR Is he showing any sign of? Any scratches on his arms or..?
MS SIMPSON No nothing like that, I mean, I don't know what it is. I can't put my finger on it, if it is … drugs, or family problems or depression, I just know that something is not quite right.

SAM Nige, you know like just sometimes I feel really, I don't know, you know. when you're just super hot-
NIGEL Wooow…
SAM No you idiot… not like that, like, just like…
NIGEL Oh you mean like really sweaty, like wooow…
SAM And then I'm really cold all of a sudden. I don't know…
NIGEL Hey I also get hot. And sometimes I'm cold.

MS SIMPSON I just wanted to know if someone can talk to him and figure out what's happening. Because I really don't want him to fail.

NIGELSam, I've done mine. I can help you if you like.
SAM I have done it. I finished it like a month ago.…

MS SIMPSON Can you speak to him?
COUNSELLOR I can speak to him but I'm not in until next week.
MS SIMPSON Next Week?

SAM It's like I'm on top of the ceiling and Ms. Simpsons talking and like I'm looking down on myself. It's just… forget it.
NIGELWow you need to stop watching stranger things…
SAM What?!

MS SIMPSON So I should just send him to you next week.
COUNSELLOR Yes please just before class and I'll speak to him.

NIGEL Look Sam, just get there, say your name and say everything really loud. Ms. Simpson said it's your last chance. Just read what you wrote.

Class /Group or Individual Work: *- younger grades**

Why was Sam feeling so anxious/stressed in the play?

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……

Why did people around Sam think that something might be wrong?

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A lot of people tried to help Sam. Can you remember any of these moments in the play? Who was it. And what did they say or do.

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……

How can do you think we can help someone who might be struggling?

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……

**Talk about the answers as a class should they students do them as individuals or small groups*

HOW TO HELP

We suggest reading this aloud as a class. We have tried to find simple sentences to describe complex problems and situations. Apart from practicing their pronunciation it can be very helpful to know as a group that everyone has heard the same information.

HOW DO WE KNOW SOMEONE IS IN TROUBLE?

- Your friend doesn't want to do the things you guys used to like doing together
- Your friend starts using alcohol or drugs
- Your friend stops going to school
- Your friend talks often about being, ugly, stupid, or worthless.
- Your friend starts talking about death or suicide.

Get your friend to talk to you. This is difficult. You can say "Are you ok? Can I help you? Is there anything I can do?"

You don't need to have the answers. Your friend just needs someone to listen. This is a big help. **Help your friend to get help.** Help your friend to talk to a parent, teacher, or counselor. It might be scary for your friend to tell someone that they have a problem. Being there together might help. Tell your friend that you can come with them.

Stick together. Mental health can make people do and say things that are hurtful or strange. But your friend is going through a very difficult time. As Nigel says in the playground scene "You can really be an asshole sometimes Sam".
When your friend gets help, they will go back to being the person you know. If you feel under pressure to help someone them talk to family and friends as well. Find support for yourself. Your feelings are important too.

Speak up if your friend is suicidal. If your friend is joking or talking about suicide, giving possessions away, or saying goodbye, tell a trusted adult immediately. Your only responsibility at this point is to get your friend help, and get it fast. Even if you promised not to tell, your friend needs your help. It's better to have a friend who is temporarily angry at you than one who is no longer alive.

While talking about this we suggest getting some students to take turns writing following sentences on the board

HOW CAN WE ALL HELP?

- Give support. Show empathy for what your friend.
- Ask questions to help understand what they're experiencing.
- Talk about mental health openly. It can be a big relief. Don't be shy.
- Tell your friend that there is help out there. That there are ways to get better.
- Help them tell an adult they trust what they are feeling and that they need help
- Ask them what the plan is after they have spoken to someone
- Stick together!

SUGGESTION FOR OLDER STUNDENTS Yrs 10/11- READ OUT LOUD AROUND THE CLASS

(There are some exercises which *younger students* can do together at the end of this passage. PANIC ATTACK FIRST AID. Some of these exercises could be done outside if the weather permits.)

PANIC ATTACKS

What is a panic attack?
A panic attack is an intense feeling of fear and anxiety. It happens if people feel anxious about something happening in their life or have experienced something difficult or stressful.
Panic attacks can be very frightening. They can be stopped with treatment. It's important to know that a panic attack ***won't cause any harm***. The feeling will pass, even if it doesn't feel like this at the time.

SIGNS AND SYMPTONS.

Our bodies can react in different ways to panic attacks. Some of these reactions include:

- Breathlessness, quick breathing or finding it hard to breathe
- Light-headedness or a feeling of fainting
- Finding lights brighter and more intense
- A rapid heartbeat and a tightness in the chest
- Sweating more than usual
- Shaky and wobbly legs
- Being teary, like they can't stop crying
- Feeling stuck, like they can't move
- Stomach cramps or feeling sick.

Which two moments in the play showed Sam having a panic attack? Take a moment to write down what happened in those scenes or talk about it as a group.

HOW DO WE HELP SOME ONE HAVING A PANIC ATTACK?

Read this through together and get the students to create a mind map on the board finding keywords and simple drawings to represent the different ideas for what we can do to help.

Creating visuals like illustrations is a very helpful way to remember this helpful **"first aid kit".**

PANIK ATTACK – FIRST AID KIT

During a panic attack, your friend may feel like they are losing control, but there are things you can help them do to take back control and feel 'grounded' again:

1. **Embrace the episode:** Sometimes, it can be easier to avoid a situation or place that makes us panic. Like not going to school or work, or avoiding certain people. However, avoiding situations can make our anxiety feel bigger. The goal is not to avoid situations that make us panic, but to help your friend learn to cope with how they feel in those situations.

2. **Go through the alphabet:** Ask your friend to name something for every letter of the alphabet. These could be animals, names, places, foods, etc. This will uses a different part of their brain and move their attention away from fear and anxiety.
   Practice this for a few moments with the students in pairs with the student who is saying the animal names closing their eyes and the other saying the letters of the alphabet for the student who has their eyes closed.

3. **Concentrate on breathing:** Breathing into your stomach rather than your chest is very calming and helps us to draw oxygen deep into our lungs. Here's an easy 3-step process:
   Place your hand on your stomach
   Take 5 deep breaths, spend 5 seconds breathing in and 5 seconds breathing out, breathing in through your nose and out through your mouth.

   Practice this for a few moments with the students. Get a student with a confident voice to read out the instructions.

4. **Find safe spaces:** If your friend feels panicked in a situation, help them to find a space where they can breathe and think calmly. This could be their home or their room. Or, an imaginary one – somewhere that feels calm – describe a beach to them or a forest with birds and trees.

5. **Help them use their senses:** Our senses are powerful tools to help deal with feelings of panic, anxiety and stress. Here's an easy way of getting your friend to use them:
   Ask your friend to sit comfortably and slowly breathe in and out. Now ask them to name some calming things: 4 things they can see, 3 things they can hear, 2 things they can smell and 1 thing they can taste.

   Get your students to do this exercise with the students as a pair in turns. This exercise is good if you have a bit more space, we suggest doing it these exercises outside at the end of the lesson if possible.