

EDUCATION PACK

express yourself; dance, identity and freindship

Suitable for young people aged 12 - 18





INTRODUCTION

This education pack is designed to support students in exploring the key themes of Threads through movement, discussion, and creative tasks. The pack includes video content, discussion prompts, and digital resources to encourage learning both in and out of the classroom.

Contents

- Introduction to the pack and it's contents
- About the show and company
- Lesson plans
- Digital resources and additional learning materials
- Information on how to book a workshop and attend a performance

Links to curriculum learning

Dance and performing arts

- Develops student's technical and expressive dance skills
- Encourages choreography and performances based on social and personal themes
- Links to GCSE and A-Level dance assessment components, including expressive intent, performance techniques, and appreciation of professional works

PSHE (Personal, Social, Health, and Economic Education)

- Supports discussions on mental health, identity, and friendship
- Encourages emotional literacy and self-expression
- Helps students develop empathy and strategies for resilience

English and drama

- Enhances storytelling through movement-based interpretation
- Encourages analysis of themes, symbolism, and narrative structure
- Links to devising techniques in drama and creative writing exercises



Physical education

- Promotes movement-based learning and kinaesthetic awareness
- Encourages teamwork, trust, and communication through partner and group activities
- Supports understanding of mental well-being through physical expression

Arts and media studies

- Explores how visual and movement-based storytelling communicates emotions
- Encourages multimedia creative responses, such as dance films, photography, and digital art

A pile of discarded clothing items, including a white t-shirt, a yellow garment, a brown sweater, and denim, against a black background.

ABOUT THE SHOW

Threads is a moving and relatable story about mental health, friendship, and identity, designed especially for young people aged 12 and up. Drawing on real stories from teens across the North of England, Coalesce Dance Theatre brings these experiences to life through an inspiring and emotional mix of contemporary dance and physical theatre.

Set on a stage filled with tossed-away clothes and a large wardrobe, two dancers take the audience on a dynamic journey of intertwined experiences that are both heartfelt and visually stunning. Threads highlights the emotional highs and lows of adolescence and the importance of friendship and support during difficult times.

The performance resonates across generations, with audience members praising its emotional depth and powerful storytelling.

“It was intimate and moving. I was really touched by the repetition of needing support and giving support—it resonated deeply with me. We all need help, but it’s not always easy to ask.”

“The storytelling was so powerful and beautifully delivered, it almost made me cry.”

With its heartfelt message of resilience, support, and connection, Threads is not only a compelling performance for young people but an experience that leaves a lasting impact.



A photograph of a man and a woman in a dance studio. The man, with dark curly hair and a beard, is wearing a light grey t-shirt and is seen from the back, with his arms around the woman. The woman, with long brown hair, is wearing a tan t-shirt with a graphic of a cage and a red high-heeled shoe. She has her eyes closed and a focused expression. In the background, there is a large window with a view of a city, a radiator, and another person in a purple shirt. The text "ABOUT THE COMPANY" is overlaid in the center in a bold, white, sans-serif font.

ABOUT THE COMPANY

Coalesce Dance Theatre is an all-female identifying, LGBTQIA+, and disability-led contemporary dance company based in Manchester. They are dedicated to telling thought-provoking, physically powerful, and socially relevant stories through striking dance theatre performances. The company engages diverse audiences and communities throughout the UK through a range of creative activity. Fern Wareham & Rachel Maffei (Co-Directors), are passionate about bringing accessible, high-quality and inspirational arts & cultural activity to audiences. Together they have established an ethos that places people at the heart of their practice, specifically supporting and making space for underrepresented female voices in their work. The company aims to create structures and networks which centre women in leadership roles, as well as enabling female stories of all kinds to be told through exciting and powerful dance theatre.

Coalesce also focus their work on the physical, creative and emotional development of children and young people across the North West of England. The company aims to support young people aged 4-25 with activity specifically tailored to their needs. The company have three successful touring shows that have been co-created with young people, embedding youth voice into the heart of the work being produced. Coalesce offer a range of access points for young people to connect, from outreach classes and workshops, to their youth company CYD, finally culminating in their professional level class DanceConnect. Coalesce believes everyone should have access to the creative arts, and are committed to supporting young people to pursue dance for both social enrichment, wellbeing and career purposes.

The company's current works 'The Old Green Time Machine' and 'Threads' have toured to over 85 theatre, library, rural touring and alternate venues in the last 3 years. The company have been widely supported by Arts Council England since 2018.





LESSON PLANS

Exploring Key Themes: Mental Health, Identity, and Friendship. Each lesson plan begins with discussion prompts designed to help students reflect on these key themes before engaging in movement-based tasks. These questions can be considered individually, in small groups, or through journaling.

Each lesson has two versions: one for pre-GCSE students and another for GCSE & A-Level students. Teachers can select the most appropriate level for their group.

Example of lesson plan structure

Each lesson follows a structured approach:

- Warm-up (10 minutes) – Icebreaker and movement-based activity
- Introduction to Theme (10 minutes) – Discussion and exploration of key concepts
- Dance Task/Activity (25-30 minutes) – Choreography and movement-based exploration
- Group Discussion (10-15 minutes) – Reflection and sharing
- Cool Down (5-10 minutes) – Relaxation and reflection

LESSON 1: IDENTITY

- What shapes your identity? - Explore how culture, family, experiences, and media shape who we are. Discuss how identity can evolve over time, especially during adolescence.
- What does it mean to be authentic? Talk about the difference between being “true to yourself” and trying to fit in. Discuss how people sometimes struggle to balance societal expectations with personal desires.
- How do you handle pressures to fit into certain groups or labels? Discuss peer pressure, societal expectations, and labels (e.g., gender, race, social groups). What impact do these labels have on one’s identity?
- What role does self-esteem play in forming your identity? Discuss how self-esteem is linked to how individuals see themselves. Explore how external factors, such as achievements or social media, affect our self-esteem.
- Does identity change over time? Reflect on how the sense of identity might change through different life stages, especially during the teenage years, and how this transformation can be positive.

Pre GCSE

OBJECTIVE: Students will explore the concept of personal identity and how it is represented through movement.

1. Warm-up: “Identity Movement Circle”

- Begin by having the students stand in a circle.
- Ask them to think of a movement that represents how they feel today, or how they see themselves.
- Each student demonstrates their movement to the class, and the group mirrors them.
- This helps to get them comfortable with expressing their feelings through movement.

2. Introduction to Theme

- Discuss how identity is not just how we look, but also how we express ourselves.
- Explore how we can show different aspects of our identity through movement, such as confidence, shyness or joy.
- Encourage students to think about what makes them unique and how dance can represent this.

3. Dance Task

- Have the students create a short sequence (4-6 moves) that expresses their personal identity.
- Encourage them to think about emotions, gestures, and levels of energy (slow, fast, sharp, flowing).
- They can work in pairs or larger groups to combine their moves together, creating sequences.

4. Group Discussion

- Ask students to share their dance sequences with the class.
- Encourage them to explain why they chose those specific movements and what they represent about their identity.
- Discuss how dance can help express feelings that might be difficult to put into words.

5. Cool Down

- Gentle stretching and breathing exercises, focusing on relaxation.
- A short reflection session where students can sit quietly and think about how they felt during the lesson.

GCSE and A-Level

OBJECTIVE: Students will delve into personal identity and articulate it through contemporary dance movements.

1. Warm-up: “Personal soundtrack”

- Play a variety of music genres.
- Ask students to identify which genre resonates with their current mood and why.
- Encourage them to improvise movements that align with the chosen music, fostering a personal connection to movement.

2. Introduction to Theme

- Discuss how dance serves as a medium for expressing complex aspects of identity.
- Explore concepts such as cultural heritage, personal experiences, and individual values.

3. Dance Exploration: "Choreographing My Story"

- Instruct students to create a 1-2 minute solo piece that narrates a significant aspect of their identity.
- Encourage the use of various dance elements—space, time, energy—to convey their narrative.
- Allow time for rehearsal and peer feedback.

4. Group Reflection and Discussion

- Invite students to share their choreography and the stories behind it.
- Facilitate a discussion on the diversity of identities and the role of dance in personal expression.

5. Cool Down

- Lead a relaxation exercise where students visualise a place where they feel most themselves.
- Encourage deep breathing and gentle stretching to promote mental and physical relaxation.

Dance Reflection Journal Prompts (for each lesson)
How did you feel when you created movements that represent your identity?
What new things did you learn about yourself through dance?

LESSON 2: MENTAL HEALTH

- What does mental health mean to you? Explore how students define mental health and what it looks like in their daily lives. Discuss the difference between mental health and mental illness.
- How can we take care of our mental health? Discuss self-care strategies like physical activity, hobbies, talking to someone, and getting enough sleep. Explore how different activities can help maintain or improve mental health.
- How does social media affect our mental health? Explore the positive and negative aspects of social media. How can constant comparison, cyberbullying, or “like culture” impact self-esteem?
- What are some common signs that someone might be struggling with mental health? Talk about the emotional, behavioural, or physical signs of stress, anxiety, or depression. Discuss how to help someone who is struggling and when to reach out for professional help
- The importance of seeking help: Discuss why it’s important to ask for help when struggling with mental health. Encourage conversations about seeking support from a counsellor, family, or trusted friends

Pre GCSE

OBJECTIVE: To explore how dance can be used as a tool for improving mental health, self-expression, and emotional regulation.

1. Warm-up: “Mood Movement”

- Ask students to walk around the space and express different moods through their movement (e.g. happy, tired, angry, excited). They should exaggerate the physicality of each mood.
- This helps students become more aware of how different emotions affect their body.

2. Introduction to Theme

- Discuss how mental health can affect the way we feel and move.
- Talk about how physical movement can release stress and help us feel more balanced and positive.
- Introduce the idea that dance can be a great tool for improving our mental health by allowing us to release emotions in a healthy way.

3. Dance Task

- Create a short routine that starts with a tense or negative emotion (like anger or sadness) and gradually transitions into a positive, more relaxed emotion (like calmness or joy)
- Students can use slow, controlled movements at first and gradually build to faster, freer movement as they express the shift in emotion.

4. Group Discussion

- Ask students to reflect on how their mood changed during the activity.
- Encourage a discussion about the power of movement and whether they feel more relaxed or energized after expressing emotions through dance.

5. Cool Down

- Practice deep breathing or mindful stretching.
- Encourage students to think about how they can use dance or movement in their daily lives to manage stress or difficult emotions

GCSE and A-Level

OBJECTIVE: Students will explore how dance can influence emotional well-being and stress management.

1. Warm-up: "Emotion Through Movement"

- Present various emotional scenarios (e.g. receiving good news, facing a challenge).
- Ask students to express these emotions through improvised movement, emphasising the connection between emotion and physical expression.

2. Introduction to Theme

- Discuss the psychological benefits of dance, including stress reduction, mood enhancement, and emotional release.
- Introduce the concept of "embodied cognition," where movement influences mental state.

3. Dance Exploration: "Mood Mapping"

- Guide students to select a piece of music that reflects their current emotional state.
- Have them create a dance that transitions from their current mood to a desired positive state, using improvisation and choreography.
- Encourage sharing and discussion of the creative process.

4. Group Reflection and Discussion

- Discuss how the creative process affected their mood and perspective.
- Explore strategies for incorporating dance into daily routines for mental health maintenance.

5. Cool Down: "Mindfulness Stretch"

- Lead a series of stretches synchronised with mindful breathing.
- Encourage students to reflect on the session's impact on their mental state.

Dance Reflection Journal Prompts (for each lesson)

How did your mood shift through movement?

Do you think dance can help with emotions? How could you use it in the future?

LESSON 3: FRIENDSHIP

- What makes a good friend? Discuss qualities like loyalty, trust, honesty, and communication. What makes someone feel supported in a friendship, and what qualities can harm friendships?
- How do you handle conflict in friendships? Discuss the importance of communication, understanding, compromise and respect.
- How can friendships influence your mental health? Explore how positive friendships can act as a support system and boost self-esteem, while toxic friendships can lead to stress and anxiety.
- Is it important to have friends who share your interests or values? Discuss the role of shared interests versus and respecting differences in friendships. How do different backgrounds and beliefs influence friendships?
- How do you support a friend who might be going through tough times? Explore ways to offer emotional support to a friend who may be struggling with mental health or personal issues. Discuss when it's important to encourage seeking professional help.

Pre GCSE

OBJECTIVE: Students will use dance to explore and strengthen friendships and trust within the group.

1. Warm-up: “Friendship Circle”

- Have the students form a circle and pass a "pretend ball" to each other using a dance move (e.g., tossing it, rolling it, passing it over or under their arms).
- The aim is for them to be aware of each other's space and work together.

2. Introduction to Theme

- Discuss the importance of friendship in terms of trust and support.
- Explore how dance can strengthen relationships by requiring cooperation and communication.

3. Dance Task

- In pairs or small groups, students will create a synchronized routine where they rely on each others to stay in sync.
- They will use mirror movements or support each other with lifts, balances, or other cooperative movements
- The key focus should be on working together and trusting each other to create a unified dance.

4. Group Discussion

- Ask students how it felt to work together as a group or with a partner. Did they have to trust each other? How did the dance help them communicate and cooperate?
- Discuss how dance can be a way to build and maintain friendships through collaboration and understanding.

5. Cool Down

- Gentle partner stretches where students help each other relax, fostering a sense of connection and care.

GCSE and A-Level

OBJECTIVE: Students will engage in group choreography to enhance collaboration, trust, and communication.

1. Warm-up: “Partner Improvisation”

- Pair students and assign them to mirror each other's movements without verbal communication. (e.g. one leader and one follower).
- Encourage synchronisation and awareness, fostering non-verbal connection.

2. Introduction to Theme

- Discuss the importance of collaboration in dance and its parallels to supportive friendships.
- Highlight how shared creative experiences can strengthen interpersonal bonds.

3. Dance Task “group narrative”

- Divide students into small groups.
- Assign each group a theme related to friendship (e.g., trust, support, celebration).
- Task them with creating a 3-4 minute group dance that portrays their assigned theme.
- Provide time for rehearsal and inter-group feedback sessions.

4. Group Reflection and Discussion

- After each performance, facilitate a discussion on the themes presented and the process.
- Encourage students to reflect on how working together influenced their understanding of friendship dynamics.

5. Cool Down “circle of appreciation”

- Form a circle and invite each student to share one positive attribute they observed in another participant during the session.
- Conclude with a group stretch, reinforcing unity and mutual respect.

Dance Reflection Journal Prompts (for each lesson)
How did you feel working with others to create a dance?

Did you learn anything new about collaboration or trust? What was the most important part of working as a team?



DIGITAL RESOURCES

Behind the scenes interviews with the Threads dancers

Janice

Luke

Carlos

Emily

Pute

Behind the scenes interviews with the Directors

Fern and Rachel

Mental health resources and additional support

Follow the company in real time via Instagram

HOW TO CONNECT WITH US

Get in touch directly via coalescedance@gmail.com or visit our website www.coalescedancetheatre.com to find out more about upcoming tour dates for threads and how to book workshop activity with us.

