

## **Self-care toolkit: Medusa**

A play by Rocks and Lavender Productions

We are really pleased that you have chosen to watch this show. In this performance we are dealing with difficult subjects. However, we hope that you will, in the end, find it a personally empowering experience. This toolkit has been designed to offer support to anyone engaging with the show, especially anyone who might be impacted by its content.

Within it, you will find information about the show (a detailed synopsis) and information about its themes. You will also find tips on how to look after yourself during the piece, and some signposting to organisations who can help if you feel triggered by any of the show's content and self-care is not enough.

Please note that by discussing the content of the show, the below information will contain key plot points and descriptions of what happens in the performance. If you would like to receive elements of this information but avoid these spoilers, please do not read Story Synopsis.

### **About Medusa**

The tale of Medusa is one of the most infamous Greek myths. The goddess is known for her coiled, snaky hair, her feminine beauty and her killer eyes - just one look can turn you to stone. There are many versions of how Medusa came to be, all of which detail her punishment for "seducing" Poseidon, god of the sea, inside Athena's temple. This performance reframes Medusa as the victim in a contemporary, patriarchal world.

Today, our feeds are filled with stories like Medusa's: of influential men abusing their power, women making compromises for fear of losing their careers, and a dark narrative questioning women's integrity in cases of assault. This new production of Medusa from emerging theatre company Rocks and Lavender Productions addresses her story through a contemporary lens, exploring ideas of abuse, cancel culture, power, sexual assault and victim blaming.

This performance uses spoken word, song, movement, projection and puppeteering to share a different perspective of events in Medusa's story. If Medusa was indeed a monster, was she not created by the trauma inflicted onto her by powerful, divine figures?

The piece was developed by Rocks and Lavender Productions through research and development with a wider group of students at St Helens college, through collaborative workshops.

### **Content Warning**

Suitable for ages 16+

Medusa is based on the greek myth and contains a dance that references sexual assault. It highlights how Medusa is blamed for the assault by people with power, exploring consent, emotional abuse and victim blaming. Although the character is mythical, this version of her story is based on reported and lived experiences. Some viewers may find the piece triggering due to this content. There is a point in the performance when Medusa screams loudly.

## **Take action if anything personal comes up for you**

Theatre can bring us face to face with our own joys and struggles. This piece of theatre contains moments that may trigger difficult emotions. The following tips are things that you can do to look after yourself if this happens.

*Advice taken from 20 Stories High resource packs for Buttercup and LOOPS which reference 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 which explores sexual assault and adult relationships.*

## **Tips: how to look after yourself**

**Make space for feelings:**

There may be times in the show where you feel strong emotions towards the characters or because of the content. This is understandable. Notice when this happens and take deep breaths to get you through those moments.

**Watch with someone:** watch the show with someone that you would feel able to discuss the themes in the play with. Preferably someone who understands you well enough to notice what things might get to you the most. If you can't watch the show with someone you could make a plan to chat with someone about it afterwards.

**Read a summary of the show:**

If you would like to know the content before you watch, so that there is nothing unexpected, you will find an overview of the show's themes and full synopsis in this document.

**Remember it's your choice:**

Remember it's your choice to watch this show. You are in control, even if you might not feel it. If you're feeling overwhelmed at any point, you can leave the room. In the foyer area there is a quiet space, resources to help with self care and our staff will be available.

**Remember your breath:**

If you become triggered, focused 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 phones 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 need to take time out there is a mental health first aider at the venue who you can talk to before, during or after the show. There is also a signposting section at the end of this document for helplines and organisations who can help.

If you notice that you've become overwhelmed and the techniques suggested here and/or the ways you usually bring yourself back into a state of calm are not working, then recognise that moment, and consider getting professional support. See below for helplines and organisations offering support.

## **Signposting**

Helplines: Sexual Abuse

The Survivor's Trust  
survivorstrust.org / 08088 010818

RASA (Merseyside only)  
rasamerseyside.org / 0151 558 1801

Not from Merseyside? Find your local support centre:  
thesurvivorstrust.org/find-support

Helplines: Report it

If you believe someone is at immediate danger, phone the police: 999  
Or call Childline (for under 18s): 0800 1111  
Or non-emergency police (for over 18s): 101

Not sure where to turn?

The Mix offers a wide range of support for young people under the age of 25.  
themix.org.uk (for 1-2-1 chat and messenger) /  
0808 808 4994

Useful Articles and Websites

Understanding Flashbacks – what's happening?  
[Read The Survivor's Trust resource](#)

My Little Book of Coping Methods  
[Read The Survivor's Trust resource](#)

Self-help guides: for you, as well as supporting someone you care about  
[Read the SARSAS guide](#)

Guides to help with healing  
[Read The Survivor's Trust resource](#)

## Story Synopsis

Note: the following description contains details of the show. Please see the content warning for information about subjects that may be mentioned.

*Opening scene: Bathed in green light and set to haunting music Medusa manipulates the bodies of the men she has turned to stone to create a throne. Medusa screams loudly to the audience. The green light goes out.*

*Poseidon talks about Medusa's beauty and that he desires her. He says that he will show her what it feels like to be loved. Hermes tells Poseidon that if he seduces Medusa he will violate the rules of Athena's temple. Poseidon says Medusa is 'a toy at our dispense.' and that the Gods are powerful over mortals. Medusa enters and Poseidon begins to lead her in a dance.*

*Light turns red and music plays. Medusa falls to the floor and Poseidon's dance becomes more threatening. Poseidon lifts Medusa by the head and pushes her back to the floor, Medusa backs away but Poseidon grabs her hands and pulls her to her feet and close to his body. Medusa is clearly distressed and does not want this to happen. Poseidon touches Medusa's body and moves her legs into a wider position. Medusa attempts to get away and struggles against him, falling to the floor where Poseidon moves her legs apart and positions his body over hers. Poseidon lifts Medusa by the head, removes a necklace from her, then pushes her away and Medusa leaves.*

*Light turns blue. Poseidon is out of breath. He holds Medusa's Necklace in the air. He describes 'bedding Medusa' and that 'she loved it'. He describes their encounter in metaphors of the sea, about his power over her as the sea over sand. He says that she 'teased him,' it was a struggle getting her to comply. 'She gave in, that's how I know she enjoyed it' 'She chose to let me in'.*

*Hermes enters and summons Poseidon to Mount Olympus to see Zeus. There, Zeus' daughter Athena enters. The accusation is that one of Athena's mortals has been 'messing' with Poseidon. Poseidon denies any responsibility, saying 'she made me do it, I had no choice in the matter'. Zeus tells Athena that they do not question the word of a god over a mortal. Poseidon presents the necklace as evidence that Medusa gave consent.*

*Medusa enters Athena's temple asking for forgiveness as a victim, but is told by Athena that she is the perpetrator. Athena banishes her and calls her an enchantress.*

*Green lighting and music plays. Four dancers surround Medusa with snake-like movements. The music stops and Athena tells Medusa she has defied the gods, she is no longer pure. The song Medusa by Kaia Jette plays. Medusa dances to the lines 'mesmerise me, hypnotise me.'*

*From off stage the voice of Athena announces Medusa's punishment. That she will take her eyes, one small glance and they will die, take her hair so it is filled with snakes and coiled with fright. That this is a life sentence. Dancers enter with a snake puppet. Medusa welcomes it and it wraps around her.*

*Blue lighting. Poseidon enters followed by Perseus. Poseidon gives him a quest to slay a gorgon for Perseus' glory and fame. To bring him the head of Medusa. Perseus briefly questions why the head, but agrees to the quest.*

*Green lighting. Perseus enters the space where Medusa is, says he has heard the stories about her and that he has been sent to slay her. Medusa says she is no beast, she does not wish it to end in bloodshed. Perseus lets Medusa turn her head, and he turns to stone. Hermes enters and wishes to clear her name, gives her a blindfold. Takes her to Zeus.*

*Clear light. Hermes questions Zeus' judgement and tells Zeus that he and Athena have been deceived. Zeus permits Medusa, a mortal, to speak. Medusa tells them that her side of the story has not been heard and that she was never disloyal to them, 'this is because you believed the word of a god...You took this man's word...solely on his status'. She says that she is a victim but yet she is being blamed. Athena says there is never any reason that she would believe her and leaves.*

*Hermes suggests that Medusa be sent somewhere no mortal and no god can ever harm her again. Zeus sends Medusa to a labyrinth far away from here. Poseidon is summoned by Zeus who sends him on a quest to a labyrinth to fetch a medallion.*

*Medusa enters. One by one, the figures fill the space, freezing into statues. Poseidon backs in and sees Medusa, turning to stone. Medusa reclaims her necklace from him. The song Medusa by Kaia Jette plays and Medusa manipulates the statues into her throne, taking her seat.*

*The cast take their bow, but Poseidon remains a statue until the scene ends.*

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This document was written by Heart of Glass with Rocks and Lavender Productions - with thanks to 20 Stories High for sharing their resource packs with us.

For more information about this performance and other projects, visit [heartofglass.org.uk](http://heartofglass.org.uk), [sign up to our monthly newsletter](#), or connect via our social media pages:

- [Instagram](#)
- [Twitter](#)
- [Facebook](#)