

BENCHMARKS

What would you say to your younger self?

**Suitable for
students in
Year 10 and
above.**

Directed by William Grave

Benchmarks: An accompanying curriculum by The OLLIE Foundation.



What would you say to your younger self?

Benchmarks is a mental health film written by William Grave and starring Emmerdale's Bhasker Patel, which considers this question from the perspective of someone who is in emotional crisis.

Winner of Best Short Short at The London Independent Film Festival 2021 & nominated for best screen play at the Papaya Rocks Film festival, Benchmarks is about a 30 something man who has a conversation with his 10 year old self. The film was retweeted by Oscar winning actor Riz Ahmed when it was released on World Mental Health Day.

The character in the film hasn't met his own expectations and wonders if he can go on living. Thankfully things take a positive turn when his 70 year old self arrives and lets him know how amazingly things turned out.

We would like to say a huge thank you to William Grave for sharing this film with us and allowing us to use it to create this accompanying curriculum.

To watch Benchmarks on Youtube please click [here](#).

To find out more about William Grave's work please visit his website [here](#).



About The OLLIE Foundation

The OLLIE Foundation is a suicide prevention charity, set up in 2016 by three Hertfordshire parents who had each lost a son to suicide. They met in bereavement support and vowed to do all they could to stop another family going through the heartache they were experiencing.

OLLIE stands for One Life Lost Is Enough.

OLLIE provides wellbeing, prevention and intervention events, training, talks and panel events for professionals, parents and students. Our mission is to reduce the incidence of suicide, particularly amongst our young people.

One way we do this is through the provision of training and education to parents, children, teens and young adults and to all those with a duty of care for others.

Through our work we aim to reduce both the stigma and the fears people have in talking about suicide. We aim to advance the pedagogy and discourse around suicide studies and effective early intervention and prevention techniques and strategies.

Our work always aims to share best practice, support curiosity, skills, capacities and knowledge so each generation can stay safer from suicide and bereavement from suicide. For more information our work and how we can support your school community please [visit our website here.](#)

Why we have created this curriculum.

Benchmarks is an extremely moving and powerful short film which shares a message of hope. It reminds the audience that whilst things may feel unbearable at any given moment, our past and future selves will thank us for pausing before acting on that pain.

Whilst directly talking about suicide and suicide prevention with young people, and doing so in an effective and appropriate way, can feel extremely challenging, the subtlety of this film combined with the power of the message it portrays makes it an ideal way of beginning to raise awareness of suicide amongst your school community.

We have created this resource to provide schools with a range of resources that they can use in these lessons to facilitate students' exploration the film, the messages it shares, and their responses to it. It provides various activities which will suit the needs of all students, from those who prefer creative writing or art to those who excel at critical thinking. **Please note that this curriculum is designed for students in Year 10 and above.**

Key Messages and Learning Points

The key message of the film is that the older 70 year old character thanks his younger 30 year old self for sticking around even though lots of things in his life didn't go to plan.

As well as this message, there are a number of other learning points throughout the film that you can draw student's attention to and provide opportunities for valuable class discussions.

- **Where to turn for support:** Although it is not directly mentioned in the film, the lead actor Omar Hashmi has had his own mental health challenges and has sought advice from organisations such as Samaritans in the past. This could be a starting point for a discussion to check students' understanding of where they can go for help if they are struggling (both within school and externally) and signposting them to support if they are unsure. Perhaps asking students to work collaboratively to create a list of support organisations on the board which can then be circulated to the whole class would be a helpful way of sharing this information.
- **Overcoming challenges:** The film sees the youngest character asking his 30 year old self whether he had met his goals - becoming an astronaut, getting married, living abroad. There is an important learning point for young people here, which reminds them that whilst having aspirations is important, they will meet unexpected challenges along the way, and this may mean that their goals don't quite go to plan. The critical thinking task on page 8 of this booklet will help students to consider this message further, but you may also choose to have a class discussion around how to cope with disappointment when things don't go to plan. You could use a quote on the board to begin the conversation such as...

“Rejection is merely a redirection; a course correction to your destiny.” — Bryant McGill, author and activist.

“To be fully alive, fully human, and completely awake is to be continually thrown out of the nest.” — Pema Chodron, Buddhist nun and author of “When Things Fall Apart”.

- **Suicide does not only affect those who live with mental illness:** There is a common misconception around suicide that only those with a mental illness would end their own life. And whilst there is an association between mental illness and suicide, it is important to be clear that suicide and suicidal thoughts can affect anybody. That person who lost their job, who can't afford to pay their bills, who finds out their partner has been cheating on them, and in the case of the film, that person who realises they've reached the age of 30 without achieving their goals. It is important staff, where possible, feel able to have these conversations with students and in doing so create an open, safe environment where the stigma around suicide can be challenges in an effective and appropriate way. We would highly recommend that staff who are facilitating these conversations attend our Talk Safe, Plan Safe - Suicide Prevention Training which is a 2 hour online session teaching suicide awareness as well as how to create a safeplan with somebody you are concerned about. We run regular online open sessions and can also deliver this as an in-house session. You can find more information about this training on page 11 of this booklet.

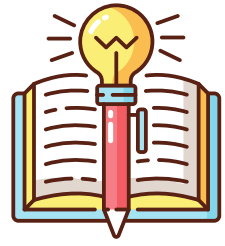
Guidance for Teachers

This curriculum is intended to gently open up the conversation about suicide with students in **Year 10 and above**. As mentioned on the previous page, we would strongly recommend that all members of staff (and particularly those leading these sessions), attend our Talk Safe, Plan Safe-Suicide Prevention Training before teaching about suicide. This will ensure that they are equipped with the knowledge, understanding, and tools to safely and appropriately manage the potentially difficult emotions and subsequent conversations that may arise throughout these lessons and to accurately answer questions from students. We have also included some guidance for teachers below which will support the safe and effective delivery of these lessons.

- Students should be made aware of the content of this film and the follow-up activities **before** the lesson takes place. They should be given the opportunity to opt out of the lesson if they feel it will be activating for them in any way and alternative provision should be made for these students.
- Your pastoral and safeguarding teams will be aware of students who may find these sessions particularly challenging. 1-to-1 conversations should be had with these students to discuss the lessons, what they will cover, whether they would like to attend, and giving specific guidance on where they can turn to if they need support.
- Learning and talking about suicide can evoke some very challenging emotions for both students and staff. Consideration should be given as to the support that will be available before, during and after the lessons and arrangements should be made ahead of the lesson delivery. For example, where can students go if they feel activated during the lesson or unable to attend their next lesson? Who will be there to support them and who will contact home to let parents/carers know? What support is in place for staff and what arrangements will be made if any member of staff finds it too activating to deliver lessons about suicide?
- Consideration should be as to when in the day/week/term these lessons will be delivered so that there is sufficient opportunity for students and staff to access the support in school should they feel activated or in need of help after the session. Therefore we would recommend delivering these lessons on a Monday, Tuesday or Wednesday of your chosen week(s) and nearer the beginning of the school day. We would also advise against teaching this content near the end of a school term or half term.
- We would recommend making parents/carers aware that students are being taught about suicide, especially if this is the first time suicide awareness is being taught in your school. This will allow them to ask any questions they have as well as giving them time to prepare for any subsequent conversations or questions that arise at home.
- Please make it clear to students before each activity whether they will be required to share what they have written.
- If students make any disclosures following these sessions then your schools safeguarding protocol must be followed. If you need support or further information at any time please feel free to email the team at OLLIE who will gladly assist you- emily@theolliefoundation.org

A Letter to My Younger Self

Creative Writing Task



Instructions:

Watch the [Benchmarks film](#) as a class. There are 2 options with this task. You can either:

- Imagine you are the 70 year old character from the film and write a letter of hope to the 30 year old.
- Write a letter of hope to YOUR younger self. It could be addressed to you last year or 10 years ago.

You can be creative with the layout of the letter - is it a formal letter/a diary entry/an email?

Things you may wish to include:

- Start by introducing yourself. What age are you now and what age are you writing to?
- What do you know now that you wish you had known when you were younger?
- What are some of the most important lessons you have learnt since you were that younger age?
- What barriers have you overcome so far and how did you overcome them?
- Are there any special people or groups of people who have helped you become the person you are now?
- A message of hope for when you are faced with difficult times in the future.

If you are writing a formal letter:

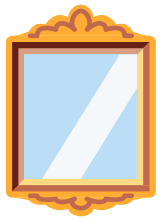
	Your address
Recipient's address	The date
Short greeting introducing yourself	
Your letter	
Signing off	

Note for teachers:

As with all of the tasks in this pack, we would advise making it clear to students from the very beginning of this activity whether their letter will be read by another person or if they will be asked to share their work with the class.

My Self Portraits

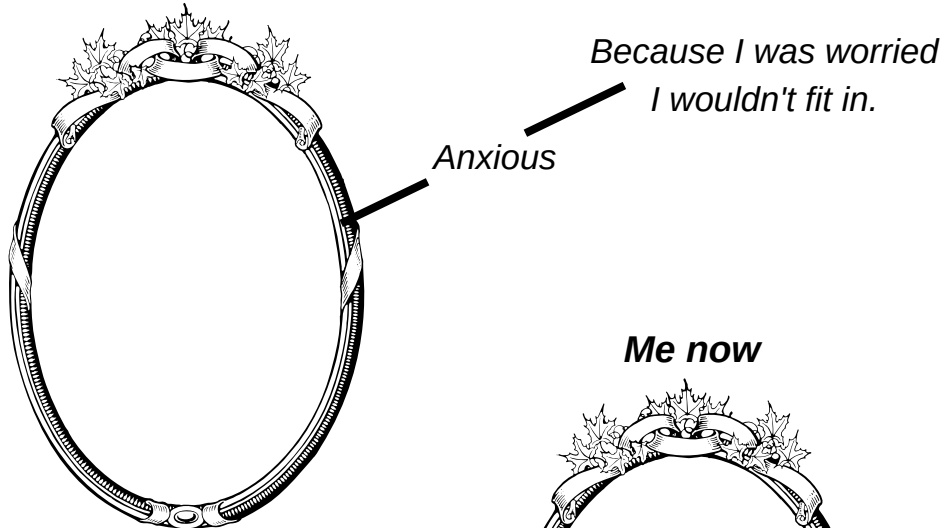
Creative Arts Task



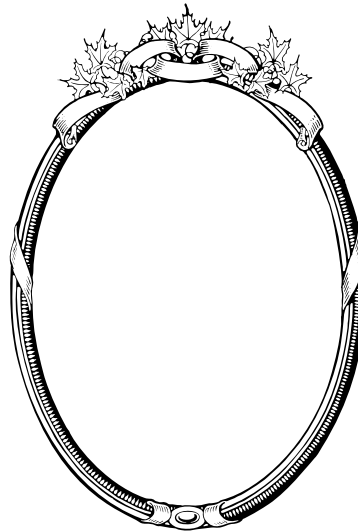
Instructions:

- Watch the [Benchmarks film](#) as a class.
- Use the mirrors below to draw a portrait of yourself in the past, present and future.
- Use the space around the mirrors to annotate your portraits describing all of the emotions you felt/feel in each of those life stages.
- Challenge Task: Add a second layer of annotations with reasons for those emotions. There's an example below to help you.

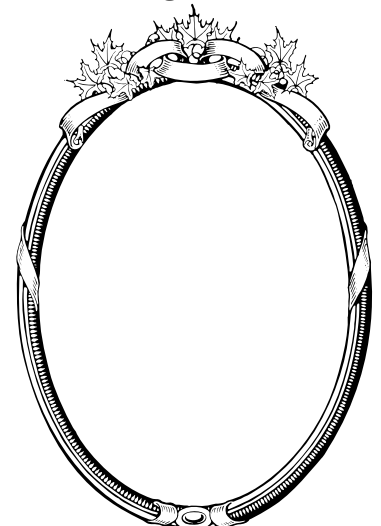
Past me at age:



Me now



Future me at age:

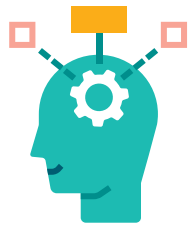


Note for Teachers:

This activity could also be done with students using clay or plasticine to sculpt their 3 self-portraits or they could pick three objects they feel represents them at different stages of their life. This would provide opportunity for a useful class discussion around why they've chosen each object.

Filling in the gaps

Critical Thinking Task



Instructions:

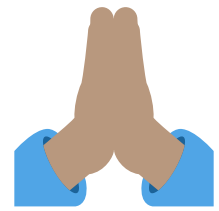
- Watch the [Benchmarks film](#) as a class.
- You will notice the difference between the 30 year old character and his older self. At 30, the character feels like a failure, and talks to his younger self about all the things that he didn't achieve. But, by the age of 70, he is saying thank you to his younger self for sticking around.
- In pairs, try to come up with some of the reasons why the characters mindset changed over the years. What events might have happened that meant he was glad not to have acted on his pain in his 30s? Try to come up with more than one possible reason for each row. One suggestion has been included for you.
- Feedback to the rest of the class.

30 Year Old Character	What might have happened in between?	70 Year Old Character
I didn't become an astronaut, a professional footballer, a movie star or a doctor.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I found a passion for cooking and became a chef. • • 	Thanks for sticking around.
I messed up the relationship I dreamt of as a child.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • • 	
I've just grown a beard and got a tattoo. That pretty much sums me up.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • • 	
Sometimes I don't want to be anywhere.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • • 	

Challenge Task: Create a table like the one above for your life. In the first column think about some of the goals that you would like to achieve in your future. What happens if you don't achieve some of these? What could happen in between that will make you thankful for sticking around when you're 70?

A Letter of Gratitude

A Reflective Task



Instructions:

- Watch the [Benchmarks film](#) as a class.
- In the film the 70 year old character says thank you to his 30 year old self for sticking around.
- The key message here is that despite all of the challenges he faced, and the goals he hadn't achieved, his future self was thankful he had chosen to live.
- Your task is to write a letter to somebody you'd like to say thank you to.

Who am I writing to?

- When writing your letter, address it to somebody you are thankful to.
- It might be somebody who is in your life now, somebody in your past or even somebody you haven't met yet.
- You could even address the letter to yourself.

What am I thankful for?

- Think about somebody who has helped you in some capacity throughout your life.
- It might be that teacher who helped you master algebra after years of finding it impossible.
- It could be your parent who is always there for you no matter what.
- It could even be that person who doubted you, who didn't want to be your friend, who upset you at the time. But who taught you how to ignore the opinions of others and to focus on being unapologetically yourself.
- Maybe you are thankful to yourself - for always having your own back and being resilient in the face of challenges.

What should I include in my letter?

The content of the letter is really up to you. But you may want to consider the following if you're stuck:

- Say a little bit about yourself - who you are, what stage of your life are you in and how things are going.
- Who the person is you're writing to and why you are thankful for them?
- What did you learn from this person and how are you using these lessons in your life now?

What happens to my letter?

- Your teacher will let you know whether your letter will be read or marked by them before you start the task.
- The outcome of the letter beyond that is your own choice. You may like to send it to the person you are thankful for if that is possible. Or you may prefer to see this letter as an opportunity for closure- saying thank you to a chapter of your life that you would now rather close. In which case you may choose to shred or tear up your letter as a way of closing the chapter and releasing those unwanted emotions at the same time.

My Overall Learning Summary Task



Instructions:

- Watch the [Benchmarks film](#) as a class.
- This task could be used as a plenary following one of the other tasks in this pack or as a stand-alone activity if you are short on time in a lesson.
- The scaffolding below provides guidance for students' written answers, however this task could be done as a group discussion task or with students writing answers on post-it notes which they then stick around the room under different headings.

4 things I noticed...

3 feelings I experienced...

2 key things I will take away...

1 question I'm left with...

Extending this task: This task could be extended in a following lesson by asking students to carry out research in order to answer a question from a others in the class. For example a question might be, where can I turn to if I feel like the 30 year old guy in the film, and the research would centre around internal support networks within school as well as external organisations that can help.

OLLIE's Work in Schools

How can we support your community?

Our Suicide Prevention and Wellbeing Training and Workshops:

Our three main trainings are available for online or in-person delivery.

- **The Science of Goal Setting** - (suitable for all age groups): Explores problem solving and goal setting and can be used for aspirational, academic, work and team goals. It can also be used to support students in their transition to the next stage of their education e.g. moving from Year 6 to secondary school or from Year 13 to University.
- **Keeping Safe and Carrying On** - (suitable for all age groups) Allows delegates to explore the biology and neurobiology of our emotions and how to use that knowledge to reduce stress and anxiety.
- **Talk Safe Plan Safe - Suicide Prevention Training:** (suitable for staff, parents and carers aged 17+) A down to earth, practical talk about suicide prevention with guidance for those who have a responsibility for others. This talk considers some of the risk and protective factors that we all need to know about and how we can support someone in an emotional crisis while we are waiting for other support to become available.

* Talk Safe, Plan Safe is now also available as two separate 75-minute sessions; Part 1: Talk Safe and Part 2: Plan Safe*

Write to Release:

Write to Release is a guided session which invites small groups of delegates to explore and express their feelings in relation to a person they have lost or a set of circumstances that have changed, and how they feel about their experience of grief, through their private writing. It is suitable for participants aged 10 and over and is supportive for all types of loss, but will be particularly useful for those who might not be automatically offered counselling or support but are still deeply impacted by an experience of grief.

Zentangle:

Zentangle is a mindful drawing workshop where participants are guided to create beautiful patterns using simple lines, shapes, orbs and curves. Whilst it looks complicated, Zentangle is suitable for everybody and there is no artistic ability required to participate. Throughout the session, tangles are invited to relax and reflect, and realise that even if their pattern doesn't look the same as everybody else's, it is beautiful and unique all the same. These sessions can be delivered online or in-person and are suitable for all age groups. We also run open online sessions on a fortnightly basis - which may be of particular interest and benefit to staff or students who are currently off school for long term medical reasons or for students who are experiencing Emotionally Based School Refusal. For more information about our open sessions click [here](#).

Other Useful Resources:

Guidance for Educational Settings Following a Suicide or Sudden Death:

A collaboration between OLLIE, and Educational Consultants, Tooled Up Education, this document is a one-stop guide for schools and other educational settings to turn to in the tragic event of a suicide or sudden death in their community. It contains reliable information and evidence-based advice to help leadership teams coordinate an appropriate, helpful, and safe response following a suicide or sudden death. The guide has been written to help staff as they navigate their way through an extremely difficult time, all whilst supporting students, families, and each other as best they can. You can download your copy for free from our website [here](#).

Planting The Seed: A mini wellbeing curriculum for primary schools:

Planting The Seed introduces the ideas of wellbeing and goal setting to primary-age students through the simple activities of planting, nurturing, and growing a sunflower seed. We provide the sunflower seeds and an accompanying resource pack which includes ready-made lesson plans, worksheets, differentiation opportunities etc.

Worried about funding? - The Oli Leigh Trust Bursary is here to help:

The Oli Leigh Trust provides bursaries for educational settings who wish to bring in any of our training and talks but don't have a budget available. For more information and to complete the simple application please click [here](#).

Getting in touch:

- If you have any questions about our work or how we can support your community please don't hesitate to get in touch with OLLIE's Schools Lead - Emily at emily@theolliefoundation.org
- You can hear all about our work and latest updates by signing up to our newsletter [here](#).
- Our website has more information about the foundation and a calendar with the upcoming dates for our open training sessions. Find out more [here](#).

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The OLLIE Foundation

One Life Lost Is Enough

Registered Charity
Number: 1167116

Call us on
07715 311891