



Presents the

One Humanity Tour  
production of

## **Hungry Ghosts**

by Eric Coble

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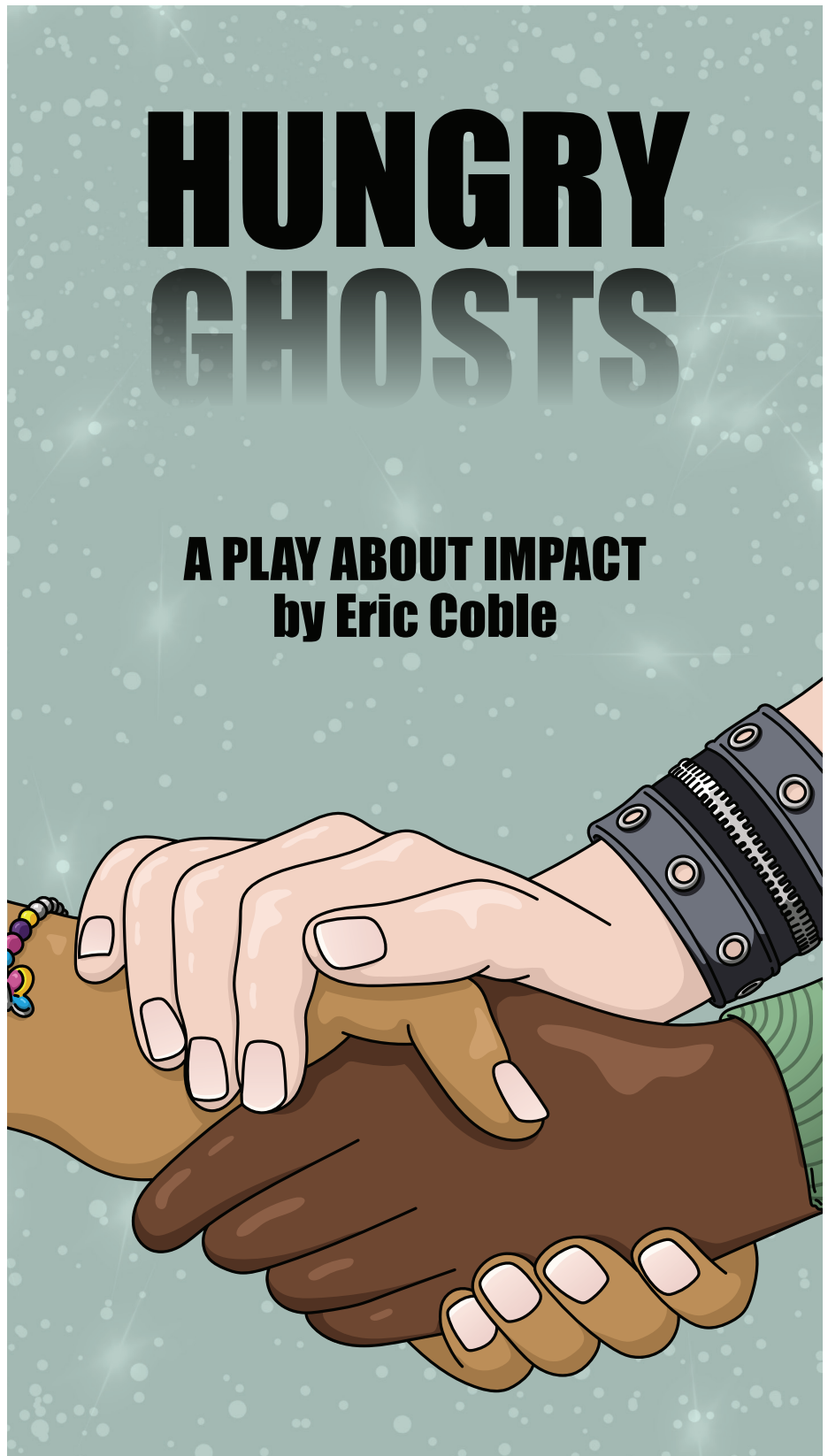
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# **Resource Guide for Teachers**

This tour is generously funded by: **HEARST** *foundations*

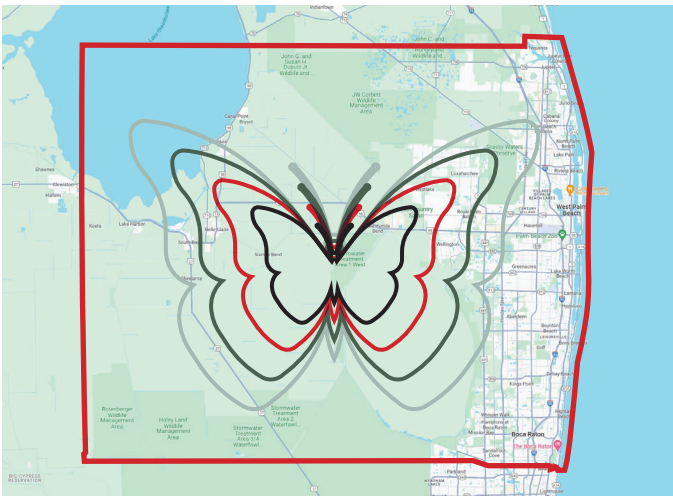
# Educators, Administrators, Staff and Parents/Guardians:

Thank you for participating in the Palm Beach Dramaworks One Humanity Tour, the world premier production of playwright Eric Coble's play, *Hungry Ghosts*. The play, this guide, and post-performance discussion address opioid addiction, and was created for 8th grade students.

**Palm Beach County leads the state in opioid overdose deaths. According to the Palm Beach County Health Department, there were an average of 49 emergency overdose calls per day for children aged 0 – 19 during summer 2023.**

In an effort to support education, awareness, and prevention efforts at the middle school level, this tour uses the power of storytelling and the performing arts to draw attention to the severity of this local issue. Viewing this play and participating in the talkback touches upon:

- **Responsible Decision-making**
- **Self-Management**
- **Self-Awareness**
- **Relationship Skills**
- **Social Awareness**



## Characters

**Kal:** A boy who's floating; sophomore in high school

**Valora:** A girl who's racing; freshman in high school

**Neri:** A girl who hangs around the edges; 8th grade

## Setting

Various locations in our community.

## Synopsis

Three teens reflectively share their story. Valora was a talented, popular runner until the day she injured her knee in a race. Her sister, Neri, was her biggest supporter. Kal, a talented gamer, loves music and his guitar. Kal attends a party and tries marijuana, which escalates into trying harder and more addictive drugs. Valora was given a prescription to pain medication after her accident and became dependent on it. When her pills run out, she finds more through a friend, and eventually seeks a dealer. Kal and Valora's paths merge as they seek bigger and cheaper highs, resulting in opioids and eventually heroin. Neri knows something is off with her sister and watches as she disappears in front of her. Their lives fall apart. After stealing money from his family, Kal ends up in jail. When Neri notices Valora is using needles, she tells her parents and Valora is sent to rehab. Both Kal and Valora detox, but when Valora comes home, she seeks out her dealer and overdoses her first night back. Kal finds out and wants to stay clean, hoping to find music again. Neri wishes for a time machine.

For a full, detailed synopsis, please visit the One Humanity Tour pages at [palmbeachdramaworks.org](http://palmbeachdramaworks.org)

## Trigger Warnings

- Depression
- Addiction
- Death by overdose
- Grief
- Divorce
- Incarceration

## Themes

- Drug use
- Drug overdose
- Opioid Crisis
- Addiction for individuals and families
- Peer pressure
- Depression

## Images and Metaphor

- Warm Cloud
- Ghosts
- Time Machine
- Drifting
- Racing
- Watching from the sidelines

# A PLAY ABOUT IMPACT

## Quotes

**Valora:** “And after about two weeks I do notice that not just my knee stops hurting when I take the pills, but like my mind finally calms down. Like all the raging scared needles just get sucked up in this warm pillow and I’m like, “You know what? I think I am gonna be okay.” And of course, this is right when the doctor says we gotta scale back your medications.”

**Kal:** “We can always quit.”

**Neri:** “So there’s this other kind of ghost story I remember. Like a Chinese one, I think. What they call ‘hungry ghosts.’ These spirits that are doomed to want food all the time, to never be able to be full, they like walk the earth forever starving. It feels like Valora’s turning into one of those.”



## Vocabulary/Terms and Definitions:

**fate** - The development of events beyond a person’s control, regarded as determined by a supernatural power.

**blaze** - A slang term for smoking marijuana.

**joint** - A rolled marijuana cigarette.

**Percocet** - An opioid prescription pain medication that contains oxycodone.

**Vicodin** - An opioid prescription pain medication that contains hydrocodone .

**weed** - Another word for marijuana.

**stoned** - Intoxicated or dazed, under the influence of drugs.

**Oxy** - Oxycodone, a narcotic used for moderate to severe pain, highly addictive. Can cause respiratory distress and death when taken in high doses or alongside other drugs, alcohol or medications.

**addictive** - A type of substance that causes physical and mental dependency and individuals are unable to stop without incurring adverse effects.

**Fentanyl** - A synthetic opioid typically used to treat patients with chronic severe pain or severe pain following surgery. Fentanyl is a Schedule II controlled substance that is similar to morphine but about 100 times more potent. Fentanyl is highly addictive and drug dealers lace other drugs with it or sell it on its own illegally.

**laced** - A drug is laced when it is mixed with one or more substances.

**heroin** - A substance made from morphine, highly addictive and illegal.

**withdrawal** - The physical and mental symptoms that a person has when they suddenly stop or cut back the use of an addictive substance, such as opioids, nicotine products, or alcohol.

# Discussion Questions and Best Practices

The themes explored in *Hungry Ghosts* are difficult to discuss and yet critical for community health and prevention. We recommend framing the questions in a safe and supportive way, ensuring students are aware of resources, and using mental health breaks.

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## How to Frame the Discussion:

- Establish community agreements for group dialogue and discussion. Ensure students are respectful of their peers' contributions as well as their own.
- Ensure students have access to community and school resources prior to the discussion (see local and national suggestions in the guide). Remind students which adults they should contact on campus if they are concerned for themselves or a peer.
- Finally, include mental health breaks. These can be breathing exercises, stretching, focus games, creative writing, or even drawing to music. We recommend ending challenging conversations with one of these activities in order to help students transition.

## Pre-Show Discussion Questions:

1. When you hear the word addiction what comes to mind?
2. What do you know about opioids and their effects on the body and mind?
3. Why might a doctor prescribe opioids, and what are some safe practices for using them?
4. How might a peer, friend, or acquaintance influence someone's decision to try drugs? What are some strategies to say no or remove yourself from the situation?
5. What are some warning signs that someone might be struggling with addiction? Why is it important to recognize these signs early?
6. Who are the people you can turn to if you or someone you know needs help?

7. How can friends and family play a role in preventing and addressing addiction?
8. How might drug addiction impact someone's future dreams and goals?
9. What are some healthy ways to cope with stress and challenges?

## Post-Show Discussion Questions:

1. What were the reasons Valora and Kal started using drugs?
2. How did their choices affect their lives and the lives of those around them?
3. How did you feel when you watched Valora's and Kal's journeys unfold?
4. What part of the story impacted you the most, and why?
5. What were the consequences of opioid use for Valora and Kal?
6. What steps did Valora and Kal take towards recovery, and what challenges did they face?
7. How did Neri try to help her sister Valora, and what challenges did she encounter?
8. What can you do if you suspect a friend or family member is using drugs?
9. What are some lessons you learned from the play about preventing opioid addiction?
10. How can you apply these lessons in your own life and help others?
11. What challenges will Kal face as he tries to stay clean? What are ways he can seek support? How can other people in his life help?
12. What challenges will Neri face? How can other people in her life support her healing journey?

# Activities Related to the Themes in *Hungry Ghosts*

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## Letter Writing

Kal has a long road ahead of him in recovery. When someone has experienced so much hardship and pain, hearing from a friend or supporter is extremely helpful.

Write Kal a letter of encouragement. What do you think he needs to hear? Who should he reach out to in his community if he feels vulnerable? What are some reasons and strategies he can rely on to stay strong and independent of drug use?

Finally, create a mantra or slogan for him to post somewhere in his room and read every day. On the back of your letter, illustrate the slogan or mantra. What words might help him stay strong, focus on healthy choices, or the good things in life?



## Selfcare Checklist

Life will always have ups and downs in addition to more extreme hardships. Whether you're moving through something challenging or not, knowing what makes you feel better is invaluable for staying healthy and vibrant throughout your life. Everyone needs coping strategies whether you're a young person or an adult.

Take some time to brainstorm activities, strategies, or individuals in your life that make you feel good. These should be supports for your overall health and well-being. Examples include: listening to music, drawing, running, playing sports, taking a walk with a friend, playing an instrument, taking a social media break, yoga, swimming, exploring nature or being outside, cooking, etc.

Create your own checklist with a list of activities under the following categories:

- What helps me feel calm?
- What helps me feel happy?
- What gives me energy?
- What helps me feel connected to others or the world around me?

Share your ideas with a classmate. Do you like any of their strategies? Add or adjust your list. Decorate your list and personalize it. Put it somewhere where you'll see it or can find it easily. Remember, taking care of yourself is important even when you feel good. This tool is valuable to reference at any time.

# Resources

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## LOCAL RESOURCES:

### **Drug Abuse Foundation of Palm Beach County (DAF):**

**Description:** Offers prevention, education, and treatment services for substance abuse.

**Phone:** (561) 278-0000

**Website:** [www.dafpbc.org](http://www.dafpbc.org)

### **Substance Awareness Coalition of Palm Beach County:**

**Description:** Works on community initiatives to reduce substance abuse through education and prevention.

**Phone:** (561) 844-5952

**Website:** [www.pbcscac.org](http://www.pbcscac.org)

### **Hanley Foundation:**

**Description:** Provides substance abuse prevention programs, educational resources, and support for families.

**Phone:** (561) 268-2355

**Website:** [www.hanleyfoundation.org](http://www.hanleyfoundation.org)

### **Boys & Girls Clubs of Palm Beach County:**

**Description:** Provides youth development programs that include substance abuse prevention and education.

**Phone:** (561) 683-3287

**Website:** [www.bgcpbc.org](http://www.bgcpbc.org)

## NATIONAL RESOURCES WITH LOCAL CHAPTERS:

### **National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA):**

**Description:** Provides extensive information on drug abuse, prevention strategies, and educational materials.

**Website:** [www.drugabuse.gov](http://www.drugabuse.gov)

### **Partnership to End Addiction:**

**Description:** Offers resources for prevention, treatment, and recovery, including support for families.

**Phone:** 1-855-378-4373

**Website:** [www.drugfree.org](http://www.drugfree.org)

## EMERGENCY RESOURCES:

### **Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Helpline:**

**Description:** Provides 24/7 confidential support for individuals facing substance abuse issues.

**Phone:** 1-800-662-HELP (4357)

**Website:** [www.SAMHSA.gov](http://www.SAMHSA.gov)

### **211 Palm Beach and Treasure Coast Crisis Hotline**

**Description:** Offers free, 24/7 confidential support for children and teens in crisis for any situation.

**Phone:** 211

**Text:** Text your zip code to 898211

**Website:** [211palmbeach.org](http://211palmbeach.org)

### **988 Crisis and Suicide Hotline:**

**Description:** Provides 24/7 confidential substance abuse support anywhere in the nation.

**Phone:** 988

**Text:** 988

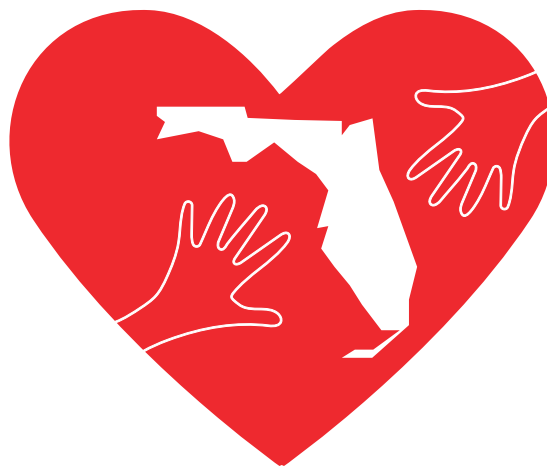
**Website:** [988lifeline.org](http://988lifeline.org)

### **Crisis Text Line:**

**Description:** Offers free, 24/7 confidential support for those in crisis. Text a trained counselor for help.

**Text:** Text HOME to 741741

**Website:** [www.crisistextline.org](http://www.crisistextline.org)



# Standards Addressed

By watching *Hungry Ghosts* and participating in discussions and activities, students will address the following Florida State Standards.

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## RESPONSIBLE DECISION-MAKING

1. HE.68.CE.2.1 Analyze possible solutions to a problem to determine the best outcome for yourself and others.
2. HE.68.CE.2.2 Construct a plan to organize and prioritize responsibilities while anticipating challenges.
3. HE.68.CE.3.3 Apply ethical and responsible decision-making that considers multiple perspectives.
4. HE.7.B.4.2 Demonstrate refusal, negotiation, and collaboration skills to enhance health and reduce health risks.
5. HE.7.B.4.4 Demonstrate how to ask for assistance to enhance the health of self and others.
6. HE.7.B.5.1 Predict when health-related situations require then application of a thoughtful decision-making process.
7. HE.7.B.5.2 Select healthy alternatives over unhealthy alternatives when making a decision.
8. HE.7.B.5.4 Determine when individual or collaborative decision-making is appropriate.
9. HE.7.B.5.5 Predict the short- and long-term consequences of engaging in health-risk behaviors.

## RELATIONSHIP SKILLS

1. HE.68.CE.1.1 Describe the benefits of compassion building and sustaining relationships.
2. 8.CE.3.1 Demonstrate empathy in a variety of contexts and situations.
3. HE.68.CE.4.1 Describe the benefits of kindness and trust on building and sustaining relationships.
4. HE.68.CE.5.1 Develop and apply conflict resolution skills in a variety of contexts.
5. HE.68.CE.5.2 Analyze ways to pursue common goals as a part of a team or group.

## SOCIAL AWARENESS

1. HE.68.CE.3.1 Demonstrate empathy in a variety of contexts and situations.
2. HE.7.C.2.2 Examine how peers may influence the health behaviors of adolescents.
3. HE.7.C.2.5 Analyze how messages from media influence health behaviors.

## SELF-MANAGEMENT

1. HE.7.C.2.9 Explain the influence of personal values, attitudes, and beliefs about individual health practices and behaviors.
2. HE.7.B.4.2 Demonstrate refusal, negotiation, and collaboration skills to enhance health and reduce health risks.

## SELF-AWARENESS

1. HE.7.C.2.2 Examine how peers may influence the health behaviors of adolescents.
2. HE.7.C.2.5 Analyze how messages from media influence health behaviors.
3. HE.7.C.2.9 Explain the influence of personal values, attitudes, and beliefs about individual health practices and behaviors.

## ELA (B.E.S.T.)

1. ELA.7.R.3.2 Paraphrase content from grade-level texts.
2. ELA.7.C.2.1 Present information orally, in a logical sequence, emphasizing key points that support the central idea.

## THEATRE STANDARDS

1. TH.68.H.1.2 Analyze the impact of one's emotional and social experiences when responding to, or participating in, a play.
2. TH.68.H.1.5 Describe one's own personal responses to a theatrical work and show respect for the responses of others