
There's nowhere to hide

an excerpt from *The Fifth Step* programme.

There are certainly themes touched on in the show that might feel topical, especially the discussion around toxic masculinity, mental health, sexuality and male role models which has been turbo-charged by the success of *Adolescence*. However, Lowden observes that *The Fifth Step* is a very difficult proposition to the Netflix drama, which was actually written later. '*Adolescence* has sparked an important conversation among a lot of people, and if audiences now choose to frame our play through the same prism that's up to them and I think that's wonderful. But I believe the interesting thing with David's [Ireland] piece is that

everyone will connect with a particular part of it depending on their own life experiences. It's up to them which bits to think most about or which idea to take home.'

Nevertheless, Freeman and Lowden each connected deeply to certain aspects of the show themselves and are confident that anyone who sees it will feel the same – not only those who have gone through the AA journey. 'If you've just been alive for more than 10 minutes, there will be things in this that you relate to,' says Freeman. 'If you have relatives, or have ever loved someone, or has a hard time, or had a friend.'

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