Supporting young people who self-harm

Presented by

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@PPEPCare

With thanks to

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Overview

• Definition and function of self harm

• Understanding the association between self harm and suicide

• Supporting young people & offering alternative coping strategies including the use of safety plans
Common misconceptions
Defining self-harm
Most people who self-harm are between 11-25
Average age of onset is 12
4 times more common in girls than boys
Understanding self-harm
Self-harm can be direct or indirect
e.g. cutting vs risk taking

Self-harm can be transient or longer term

Self-harm is usually conducted at times of anger, distress, fear or worry...

...and is a way of coping with these feelings
Cutting for me releases all the built up anger and frustration and pain I feel inside. There are many things that happen to me in my life which cause the pain I feel and how I release it. Mostly the feelings of isolation like being outcast pretty much from relationships altogether. I don’t feel like I am a very stable person and I hate myself a lot of the time. I think body image also has a lot to do with my cutting. School is stressful, home life I can’t handle sometimes.’

Truth hurts (2006)
Put simply, self-harm is a coping mechanism...

We’re more accepting of other types...
Why do young people self harm?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emotional pain (sadness, grief, hopelessness, depression)</th>
<th>57%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-hatred (shame, guilt, dirtiness)</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anger (frustration, powerlessness)</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anxiety (fear, tension, panic)</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neediness (unsupported, unheard)</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unreality (numbness, Empty)</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Truth hurts (2006)
Common triggers

- Relationship difficulties (family & friends)
- Bullying
- Trauma (bereavement/abuse)
- Self harm in friends or media
- Life events (e.g. divorce)
- Pressure (e.g. exams)
Self Harm Cycle

1. BIG feelings
2. Can’t cope
3. Guilt & Shame
4. Relief
5. Unhealthy coping

Berkshire Healthcare
NHS Foundation Trust
What are the warning signs?
Telling other people

• Could be one of the most difficult and most important thing to do – often the first step in breaking the cycle

• The reaction of others is seen as very important in the decision about whether to seek further help

• Young people need to feel comfortable with who they speak to and often experience huge relief when they have shared their difficulties
Suicide or Self-Harm?

Some people who self-harm have a strong desire to kill themselves, but most will not.

Even if the intent to die is low, self-harm needs to be taken seriously — **people who do not intend to kill themselves sometimes do so because they don’t realise the seriousness of their injuries**.
INTENTION is our best guide

Self-Harm or Suicide?

Lethality is NOT a reliable guide

Not always clear
You learn a young person is self-harming... What next?
Four Helpful Responses:

1. LISTEN!
2. Manage your reactions
3. Offer practical support
4. Involve the student in decisions
Possible scenarios

Jade shows you fresh cuts on her arm.

They look clean and shallow and she has no visible signs of shock.

Seb is changing for PE and reveals a series of burns on his leg.

There are other young people nearby who may have noticed what’s happening.

Anika comes to you crying and clearly very distressed.

She says she has taken a packet of paracetamol but she doesn’t want to die.

Rohan has been unwell with a fever.

He shows you cuts on his arm, they look red, oozing & angry.
Questions to Consider when Responding

Is there an immediate need for medical care?

- First Aid first
- A&E if needed
- Wound management
Questions to Consider when Responding

Is the young person a danger to themselves?

If you are concerned that an episode is a serious attempt to end their life, and they are known to CAMHS:

- Contact your local CAMHS Tier 3 Team Duty Line.

If they are not known to CAMHS:

Refer to the Children, Young People and Families (CYPF) HealthHub:
Tel: 0300 365 1234
Questions to Consider when Responding

What message do you want to give the young person?

- Listen
- Remain calm
- Ask how you can help
Confidentiality

Be aware of your safeguarding policy and any potential issues

When telling other people:
• Always check with young person beforehand if possible
• Work out together who you need to talk to – discuss the importance of letting parents know and address concerns they may have about this.
• Contact parents (unless there are reasons for not doing so - in this case, consult with local safeguarding lead).
Confidentiality

• If a child or young person is known to CAMHS, contact the Lead Professional/Care Co-ordinator or local team’s duty line

• Consider referral to other services
In a nutshell

Is it in the young person’s best interest to share this information?

Yes

What? How? Who with?

No

Why not? Could you defend this decision?
What to say

Asking how you can help

Staying calm

Thanking the young person for sharing this information

Showing that you care about them as a person

Giving the young person permission to talk about the self harm

What can be helpful

Showing that you care about them as a person

Giving the young person permission to talk about the self harm

Staying calm

Thanking the young person for sharing this information

Asking how you can help
What can be unhelpful:

- Telling them that self harm is wrong
- Asking the young person to stop
- Giving a negative reaction
- Seeing them as just a self-harmer
- Giving ultimatums or applying pressure
- Assuming that every episode of self harm is for the same reason
- Giving a negative reaction
Explore alternatives ways of coping
Identifying a young person’s safety net

Confide in family and close friends

Speak with a favourite teacher

Access to appropriate information or helplines

Identifying other ways of coping with difficult feelings
Help the young person to identify less risky ways to cope with difficult emotions
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Write or draw about feelings</th>
<th>Talk to a person or helpline</th>
<th>Go to a quiet place and scream / scream silently</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hit a pillow / soft object</td>
<td>Listen to music</td>
<td>Look after an animal or sibling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Draw red lines on the skin</td>
<td>Clench ice cubes</td>
<td>Snap elastic band on wrist</td>
</tr>
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Box of Tricks...

- Candy :p
- Funky Stress Ball
- A colouring and activity book
- Mazes and Word-Scores
- Brave (DVD)
- A cuddly toy (that also ribbets!)
- Coloured pencils
- Play-Dough
- Finger Paints
- Feather
- Chinese Finger Puzzle
- Rubber Bands
- Books that make me happy!
- Meaningful Journal
Mind Full, or Mindful?
Any questions?
Further Sources of Support

www.selfharm.co.uk
www.cwmt.org.uk
www.youngminds.org.uk
www.mind.org.uk
www.nshn.co.uk/downloads.html
www.barnados.org.uk

www.minded.org.uk

#No Harm Done

Inourhands.com