

Psychological Perspectives in Education & Primary Care

Supporting young people who self-harm

Presented by

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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

Prevalence in young people?

11%



3%

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?

Emotional pain (sadness, grief, hopelessness, depression) 57%

Self-hatred (shame, guilt, dirtiness) 51%

Anger (frustration, powerlessness) 50%

Anxiety (fear, tension, panic) 34%

Neediness (unsupported, unheard) 30 %

Unreality (numbness, Empty) 9%

Truth hurts (2006)

Common triggers

Relationship
difficulties
(family &
friends)

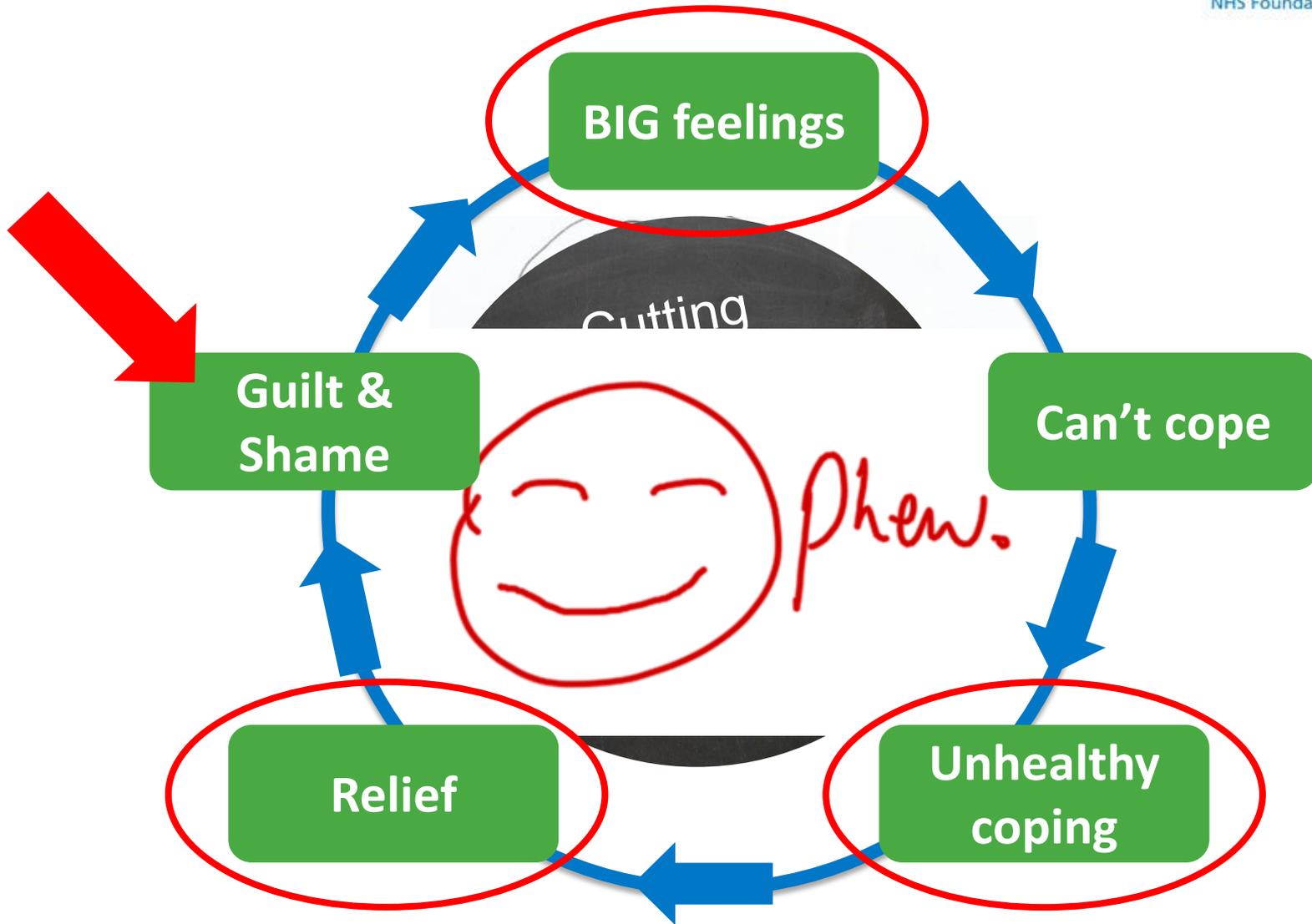
Bullying

Trauma
(bereavement/
abuse)

Self harm in
friends or
media

Life events
(e.g. divorce)

Pressure (e.g.
exams)





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
her arm.

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



Seb is changing for PE and
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
wants 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?

Thanking the young person for sharing this information

Showing that you care about them as a person

What can be helpful



Giving the young person permission to talk about the self harm

Asking how you can help

Staying calm

Asking the young person to stop

Seeing them as just a self-harmer

What can be unhelpful



Giving ultimatums or applying pressure

Telling them that self harm is wrong

Giving a negative reaction

Assuming that every episode of self harm is for the same reason

Explore alternatives ways of coping

Confide in
family and
close friends

Speak with a
favourite
teacher

Identifying a young person's safety net



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



**Write or draw
about feelings**

**Talk to a person or
helpline**

**Go to a quiet
place and scream
/ scream silently**

**Hit a pillow / soft
object**

Listen to music

**Look after an
animal or sibling**

**Draw red lines on
the skin**

Clench ice cubes

**Snap elastic band
on wrist**

Box of Tricks...

Candy :p Funky Stress Ball A colouring and activity book Mazes and Word-Searches



Brave (DVD)

A cuddly toy (that also ribbets!)

Coloured pencils

Play-Dough

Chinese Finger Puzzle

Feather

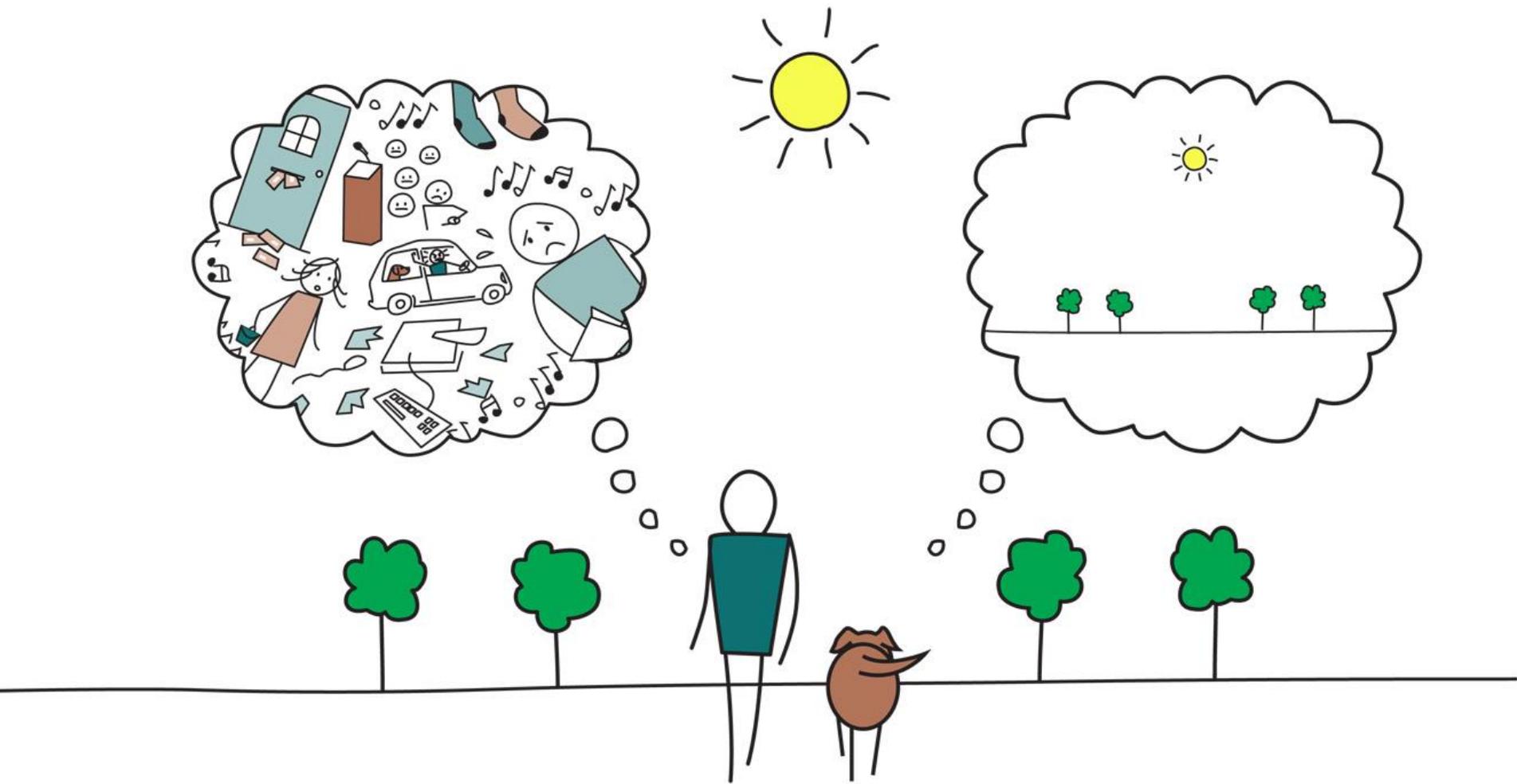
Finger Paints

Rubber Bands

Meaningful Journal

Books that make me happy!





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