

Emotional Distress (Self Harm), Suicidal Thinking & Suicidal Behaviour

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Emotional Distress (inc Self Harm)

Myth or Fact

- Self-harm is attention seeking.
- Self-harm means the person has a mental illness.
- All people who self-harm are trying to end their lives.
- All people who self-harm are clinically depressed.
- Self-harm is a coping mechanism.
- Self-harm means cutting.
- Self-harm is rare in young people.
- Self-harm is something most young people grow out of.
- A young person with mental health difficulties is more likely to self-harm than those who don't



Introducing Lucy's - Video

To access the video

- go to [MindEd Hub](https://www.minded.org.uk/Login) <https://www.minded.org.uk/Login>
- Register with an account and log in.
- Search for the course 'Understanding Self-harm and Suicidal Thinking'
- Enrol and click 'Play'
- The content will take you to 'Lucy's Story' about self harm

3.21mins



Self Harm is

a term that covers a complex range of behaviours resulting in physical harm to child or young person

when a child or young person hurts themselves and it gives short term relief when trying to cope with difficult situations and emotion

not just cutting but cutting is the most visible

Emotional Distress – Possible causes -

- being bullied
- pressure at school or work
- family arguments or relationship problems
- money worries
- low self-esteem
- struggling with stress, anxiety or depression
- confusion about sexuality
- grief after bereavement or loss
- physical or sexual abuse
- being in contact with the criminal justice system
- Exposure to childhood trauma and its impact on emotional regulation
- living with conditions such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) or autism



Why use self-harm as a coping strategy:

expressing or coping with emotional distress

trying to feel in control

a way of punishing themselves

relieving unbearable emotional distress

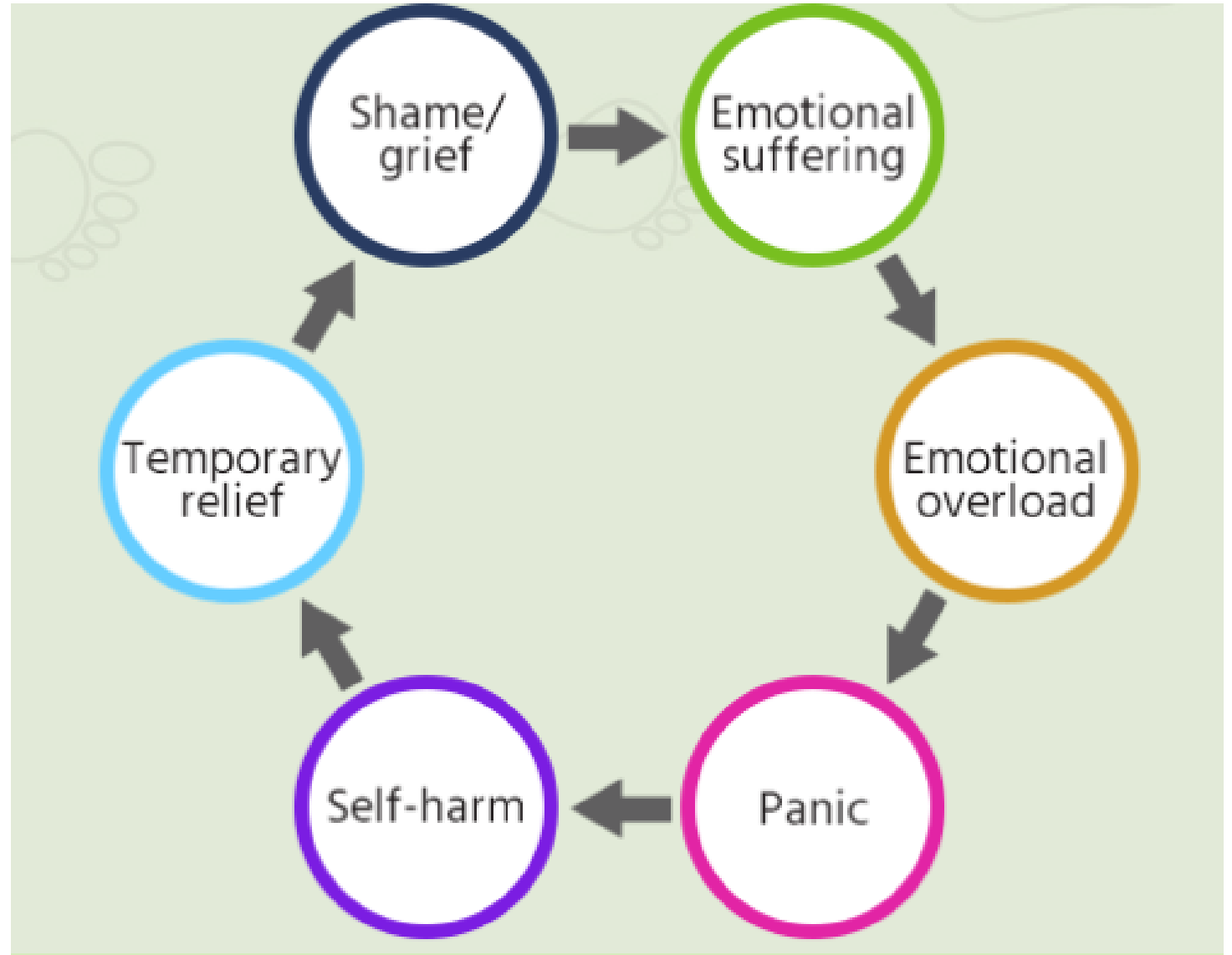
a cry for help

a response to intrusive thoughts



Cycle of Self-Harm

- She didn't want anyone to know she wasn't coping
- one thing she could control was to hurt herself - but the relief was only temporary.
- This can lead to a cycle of self-harm.



What Doesn't help

- Don't make assumptions about the child or their behaviour.
- Don't tell them to stop
- Avoid that's not bad or it's only a scratch.
 - The apparent seriousness of self-harm does not always reflect the degree of emotional pain
- Remain
 - Calm
 - Curious
 - Non-judgemental
 - Listen empathetically
 - Try to minimise shame
- Self-harm is a private behaviour
 - Will have taken great courage
 - May be first time
 - Your response is key.
- Confidentiality –
 - Don't promise - but share sensitively.
- It is difficult in schools to manage but avoid use it as a justification for exclusion.

Active Listening



Show you Care – eye contact – body language



Have patience – it takes time to open up



Use open questions – questions that don't have a yes and no answer and use 'Tell me more' -



Say it back – Check you have understood



Have Courage - not put off by negative response or silences

What should I do

- Is urgent medical help required?
 - Do respect your own limits.
 - Do discuss with Safeguarding leads
 - Do think about where you have your conversation.
 - Do be honest about confidentiality
 - Do ask them what they want and plan the next steps together
 - Do consider - what if not self-inflicted and what if is abuse.
-
- Look after yourself.



Suicidal thinking - Ayesha Video

- To access the video
- go to MindEd Hub <https://www.minded.org.uk/Login>
- Register with an account and log in.
- Search for the course 'Understanding Self-harm and Suicidal Thinking'
- Enrol and click 'Play'
- The content will take you to 'Ayesha's Story' about self-harm and suicidal thinking

Questions

- What makes Ayesha self-harm different to Lucy?
- How did Ayesha help her parents provide the right support

Suicidal Behaviour- Myths

Suicide cannot be prevented

Suicide is a normal reaction to an abnormal situation

Talking about suicide with someone increases the risk of suicidal behaviour

People who talk about suicide will not complete or attempt suicide

Identify and support suicidal students

What are the warning signs?

- Talking (or writing) about wanting to die or hurt or kill oneself (or threatening to hurt or kill oneself).
- Talking (or writing) about feeling hopeless or having no reason to live.
- Talking (or writing) about feeling trapped or in unbearable pain.
- Talking (or writing) about being a burden to others.
- Looking for ways to kill oneself, such as searching online for suicide methods or seeking access to firearms, pills or other means of suicide.

Direct
signals



- Withdrawal from family, friends and society or feeling isolated
- Deterioration in work or social functioning
- Increased alcohol or drug use
- Changes in personality, mood or behaviour. Such as extreme mood swings, acting anxious or agitated, or behaving recklessly. These can also include changes in eating or sleeping patterns
- Showing rage, uncontrolled anger, or talking about seeking revenge

Indirect
signals



Meet Dan

- Dan is 15 and is struggling at school with academic pressures of pending GCSE's.
- His teacher has observed Dan's change in behaviour and is concerned.
- The lesson is finishing and Dan's teacher would like to have a word with him to voice her concerns.

To access the video

- go to MindEd Hub <https://www.minded.org.uk/Login>
- Register with an account and log in.
- Search for the course 'Safety Planning'
- Enrol and click 'Play'
- The content will take you to 'Dan's Story'

• 4mins



Dan and the teacher

- Effective Communication - Empathy, genuine concern, not panicking-staying calm
- Active Listening - understanding distress and emotions he is expressing – Avoids panicking – offers emotional containment.
- Acknowledge limit's 'we're going to help you'
- Seeking Support from in school and outside agencies.
- Would go on to explain confidentiality and how we will help.

Agree the Response

1. Teacher to meet Dan again to
 - Discuss what work/exams are causing the most stress and think of practical steps to help
 - Hear more, and understand further, how Dan is feeling
 - In so doing, the teacher is helping Dan to re-experience a positive relationship.
2. Mental Health Lead also to meet with Dan with the idea of
 - Helping Dan find new coping strategies, which will include co-creating a longer-term 'safety plan'
3. The teacher also speak to her designated safeguarding lead to share her concerns about Dan.
4. To make sure an immediate safety plan is discussed with Dan.



Dan and Mental Health Lead – Safety Plan

7mins



Writing a Safety Plan

Getting through right now

Making your situation safer

Things or lift or calm your mood

Things to distract you

People to support you

List who to talk to if you are distressed or thinking
about self-harm or suicide

Emergency Professional Support

Safety Planning Do's and Don'ts

- Do understand your own feelings
- Do respect your limits
- Do think about where you have your conversation
- Do be honest.
- Do ask them what they want to do and try to plan the next steps together
- Do keep in mind the possibility that injuries may not be self-inflicted: consider the possibility of abuse
- Don't make assumptions.
- Don't tell them that they must stop self-harming or make threats
- Don't make any promises you can't keep but be willing to talk

What can you do in your setting?

1. [Build resilience in your setting.](#)

- Raise awareness of emotional health and the importance of recognising when children and young people need help.
- Support children and young people to develop positive coping strategies.
- Reduce stigma and break down barriers around talking about emotional health.
- Support children and young people in developing their communication skills.
- Develop supportive and help-seeking behaviour in young people.

1. [Make sure you have a Safe Space](#) so Children/ Young People can talk about their mental health and wellbeing confidentially and equip them with developmentally appropriate communication aids to make sharing thoughts and feelings easier.

1. [Train staff](#) so they are better equipped to talk about Suicide without a taboo. This will start with awareness training, general skills and then more in depth training for key people.

1. [Be aware of broader mental health needs, vulnerabilities, and risk factors.](#)

These could be previous trauma, home situation, LGBTQ+ and other protected characteristics, Neuro-developmental conditions, bullying and other stressors.

1. [Develop your own Suicide Prevention Policy](#) (template is available)

1. [Develop your own Suicide Response Plan](#) (template is available)

1. [Ensure good communication](#) with parents, agencies and especially when Children/ Young People move to a new setting.

Support organisations

- Samaritans: 08457 90 90 90 Email support: jo@samaritans.org
- Childline:, offering advice and support on a range of issues including self-harm and suicidal thoughts. Support line (24hr): 0800 11 11
- CRUSE Bereavement Care: For anybody needing support after the death of a loved one. Support line (0900-1730): 0808 808 1677
- Papyrus: A service for young people who are thinking about suicide, or for anyone worried that a young person may be contemplating suicide. Support line (1000-2200 weekdays) 0800 068 41 41Text support: 07786 209697 Email support: pat@papyrus-uk.org
- <https://thesource.me.uk/>

Useful Apps

- **Calm Harm:** Private, password protected app that gives tasks which help distract from thoughts of self-harm. <http://www.stem4.org.uk/calmharm/>
- **Stay Alive:** Provides help and support to people with suicidal thoughts, or people worried about someone else. <http://prevent-suicide.org.uk/>
- **SAM:** An app designed to support people living with anxiety. <http://sam-app.org.uk/>
- **Headspace:** Meditation and mindfulness app. <https://www.headspace.com/>
- **BeyondNow:** Free safety planning app.
- [www.Kooth.com](http://www.kooth.com) Free, safe and anonymous online chat and emotional wellbeing service for young people aged 11 to 25, across Suffolk.
- **Text SHOUT to 85258** If you are struggling to cope and need to talk, our trained Shout Volunteers are here for you, day or night.

Training Options

- Listen Video (Suffolk User Forum) <https://youtu.be/8E6hNCiiywA> (3 min YouTube clip)
- Zero Suicide Alliance [Free online training from Zero Suicide Alliance](#) (20 min online training)
- www.minded.org.uk A more in depth online training option - a range of MH topics
- [SFA: Suicide First Aid - One day training course - Grassroots Suicide Prevention \(prevent-suicide.org.uk\)](#)
- STORM Suicide Prevention Training Delivered by NSFT
- Student Life, a local charity, can provide Suicide Prevention Training to staff. [Suicide Prevention Training & Courses - Training for Life](#)