



NWCH

Self-Harm Awareness Seminar

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About - Naomi Watkins- Ligudzinska

- ▶ CEO
- ▶ BSc (Hons) Psych
- ▶ Dip, Couns
- ▶ CF, 2019
- ▶ 15yrs -
Psychotherapist
- ▶ 8yrs working for
ChildLine / NSPCC
- ▶ 12yrs working in DA,
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Objectives

- ▶ **What is self-harm, variety of presentations**
- ▶ **Learn about the factors that put some adults & young people more at risk of self-harm**
- ▶ **Recognise any warning signs that indicate someone may be harming themselves**
- ▶ **How to assess potential risk - Risk Assessment Advice**
- ▶ **What to say / what not to say**
- ▶ **Develop strategies to support people overcoming self-harm - Management Plans**
- ▶ **Signposting / Resources**
- ▶ **Covid adaptations / telephone / remote**

Emotional Trigger Warning

- ▶ This is an emotive subject and there will be some of you in this room who have been/are being affected by some of the things that will be discussed.
- ▶ Look after yourself, leave the zoom if you need some space to yourself.
- ▶ Speak to someone if you are affected by anything you see or hear in this presentation.
- ▶ There will be details of organisations/agencies you can go to for help at the end.
- ▶ I am happy for you to contact me after the session should you wish to speak to me, ask questions, etc.

What is self-harm/Why do people self-harm

Self-harm is when someone hurts themselves as a way of dealing with very difficult feelings, painful memories or overwhelming situations and experiences. Some people have described self-harm as a way to:

- ▶ express something that is hard to put into words
- ▶ turn invisible thoughts or feelings into something visible
- ▶ change emotional pain into physical pain
- ▶ reduce overwhelming emotional feelings or thoughts
- ▶ have a sense of being in control
- ▶ escape traumatic memories
- ▶ have something in life that they can rely on
- ▶ punish themselves for their feelings and experiences
- ▶ stop feeling numb, disconnected or dissociated
- ▶ create a reason to physically care for themselves
- ▶ express suicidal feelings and thoughts without taking their own life.

Cont.

- ▶ pressures at school or work
- ▶ bullying
- ▶ money worries
- ▶ sexual, physical or emotional abuse
- ▶ bereavement
- ▶ homophobia, biphobia and transphobia
- ▶ breakdown of a relationship
- ▶ loss of a job
- ▶ an illness or health problem
- ▶ low self-esteem
- ▶ an increase in stress
- ▶ difficult feelings, such as depression, anxiety, anger or numbness.

Cont.

- ▶ After self-harming people may feel a short-term sense of release, but the cause of their distress is unlikely to have gone away. Self-harm can also bring up very difficult emotions and could make them feel worse.
- ▶ Even though there are always reasons underneath someone hurting themselves, it is important to know that self-harm does carry risks. Once they have started to depend on self-harm, it can take a long time to stop.
- ▶ Other emotions can include feeling embarrassed or ashamed about it.
- ▶ They might be worried that other people will judge them or pressurise them to stop if they tell someone about it. This may mean that they keep their self harming a secret. This is a very common reaction, although not everyone does this.

- ▶ (Source: Mind - 2020)

How do people self-harm

The ways people hurt themselves can be physical, such as cutting. They can also be less obvious, such as putting themselves in risky situations, or not looking after their own physical or emotional needs.

Ways of self-harming can include:

- ▶ cutting yourself
- ▶ poisoning yourself
- ▶ over-eating or under-eating
- ▶ exercising excessively
- ▶ biting yourself
- ▶ picking or scratching at your skin
- ▶ burning your skin
- ▶ inserting objects into your body
- ▶ hitting yourself or walls
- ▶ misusing alcohol, prescription and recreational drugs
- ▶ pulling your hair
- ▶ having unsafe sex
- ▶ getting into fights where you know you will get hurt.

Young People & self-harm

- ▶ Young people might self-harm because it's a way of releasing tension or anger. It's a physical pain that they can deal with, rather than an emotional feeling that they find hard to cope with.
- ▶ It can also be a way of controlling something, especially if they feel that other parts of their life are out of control or they are trapped in a difficult situation. Self-harm can also be used as a form of self-punishment for something that a young person feels bad about.
- ▶ Feeling alone, experiencing low self-esteem and not feeling good enough in some way can trigger young people to self-harm. Others self-harm to try and break through feeling numb or 'like a zombie'. The reasons for self-harming can be very personal so it's okay if they don't know why they self-harm.
- ▶ In ChildLine's self-harm survey, young people told them self-harm can be a way of dealing with lots of different things - for example it could be because of bullying, family relationships, anger or loneliness.

(Source ChildLine, 2014).

Statistics

The number of young people contacting Childline about self-harm in the United Kingdom (UK) in 2018/19 Approximately 9,400 young girls contacted Childline with the main concern of self-harm, compared to 1,000 boys having the same concern in this year.

(Source ChildLine, 2018/19)

More than a third (36%) of 16-25 year-olds in Britain have self-harmed at some point in their lives, according to a new survey commissioned by Self-Harm UK, The Mix and YoungMinds. The survey defined self-harm as “when someone intentionally damages or injures their body”, which could include a wide range of behaviours

When asked who a young person should talk to if they were self-harming, the most common answers were: friends (68%), a counsellor (66%), a doctor (61%), a parent (53%) or a teacher (43%).

(Source YoungMinds, 2018)

Statistics

The prevalence of non-suicidal self harm in England nearly tripled over the past 10 years, but this was not matched by a rise in the use of health or other support services by patients who self harm, the first analysis of repeated cross-sectional surveys in the country has found.

16-74yr olds.

(Source BMJ, 2019)

Risk Factors

- ▶ low mood/anxiety
- ▶ an existing psychological or developmental difficulty e.g. Asperger's, Autism, learning difficulties
- ▶ difficulty communicating
- ▶ low self esteem
- ▶ poor problem-solving skills
- ▶ hopelessness
- ▶ impulsivity
- ▶ drug or alcohol misuse
- ▶ confusion about sexuality or feeling different / unaccepted (eg if gay, lesbian or bisexual)

Cont.

- ▶ **Family factors**
- ▶ unreasonable expectations
- ▶ religious/ethnicity/cultural identity dilemmas or conflict
- ▶ young carers' role within the family
- ▶ Domestic abuse
- ▶ neglect or abuse (physical, sexual or emotional)
- ▶ poor parental relationships and arguments
- ▶ depression, deliberate self harm or suicide in the family
- ▶ **Social factors**
- ▶ difficulty in making relationships/ loneliness
- ▶ persistent bullying or peer rejection
- ▶ racism
- ▶ homophobic attitudes or bullying of children who think they may be gay, lesbian or bisexual
- ▶ easy availability of drugs, medication or other methods of self harm

Warning Signs

There may be a change in **behaviour** of the person which is associated with self harm or other serious emotional difficulties:

- ▶ changes in eating/sleeping habits
- ▶ increased isolation from friends/family
- ▶ changes in activity and mood e.g. more, or less irritable or aggressive than usual
- ▶ lowering of academic grades (young people)
- ▶ talking about self-harming or suicide
- ▶ drug or alcohol misuse
- ▶ becoming socially withdrawn
- ▶ expressing feelings of failure, uselessness or loss of hope
- ▶ giving away possessions

Retaining Trust without promising confidentiality

- ▶ Confidentiality is a key concern for young people and they need to know that it may not be possible for you to offer complete confidentiality.
- ▶ If you consider that a young person is at serious risk of harming him/herself or others then confidentiality cannot be kept.
- ▶ It is important not to make promises of confidentiality that you cannot keep, even though the young person may put pressure on you to do so.
- ▶ If this is explained at the outset of any meeting the young person can make an informed decision as to how much information they wish to divulge.

Risk Assessment

- ▶ Use a Tiered Approach
- ▶ 1) Need to assess if there is any immediate risk - what type of self-harm, most recent injury, assess for risk. For physical self-harm such as cuts/burns etc, think about 'safe self-harming'
- ▶ Excellent site to learn more here:
<http://www.lifesigns.org.uk/first-aid-for-self-injury-and-self-harm/>
- ▶ 2) Do you know what the trigger is for your SH / if so, can you tell me?
- ▶ Complete any safeguarding referrals - if any disclosures
- ▶ Then ask what support would you like / what help do you need
- ▶ 3) Well done for telling me - signpost to support they have asked for

Risk Assessment

- ▶ Questions to ask:
- ▶ What may have led to your self-harm
- ▶ How you feel afterwards
- ▶ Your relationships and living arrangements
- ▶ Anything you've tried to help reduce your self-harm
- ▶ Whether you think you'll self-harm again
- ▶ Whether you have thoughts of ending your life

What to Say / What not to Say

- ▶ Acknowledge they self-harm; that is ok; that is what you are doing to cope. Do not be judgemental, be accepting
- ▶ You have done really well to tell me that, I can only imagine how hard that must've been for you (likely you are the first person they have told)
- ▶ Not telling you to stop, but need to make sure you are self-harming safely
- ▶ Then it would be good to work towards looking at other ways of coping
- ▶ What is it you want to achieve by seeking help today
- ▶ What support do you feel you need
- ▶ How do we get you feeling better about yourself and your life
- ▶ Carry out a risk assessment

- ▶ **DO NOT**
- ▶ Pass judgement, be critical, act shocked or disgusted, not take it seriously, get frustrated (Especially if they say "I don't know why", don't act like it is a waste of your time or services time

Develop strategies to support people overcoming self-harm - Management Plans

- ▶ Care plan needs to include what the person wants from support
- ▶ Referral to talking therapies
- ▶ Medication if appropriate / psychiatric referral
- ▶ Plan to work towards alternative coping methods / reducing amount of self-harm / injury
- ▶ Support network - family / friends / agencies
- ▶ Refer to DA / Substance misuse etc if needed

Alternatives to self-harm

Feeling alone or isolated?

- ▶ Try: talking to someone, writing down how they feel, chatting to a friend, doing some exercise, walking the dog, wrapping themselves in a blanket

Feeling angry?

- ▶ Try: punching something like a pillow, doing some exercise, running, screwing up paper and throwing it, snapping twigs, squeezing clay, hitting a rolled up newspaper on a door frame, screaming, crying, or having a cold shower.

Do you feel like you hate yourself or that you're not good enough (low self-esteem)?

- ▶ Try: listening to music, having a bath, burning incense, phoning a friend, writing, painting, or listing good things about themselves.

Cont.

Do you feel like you can't control things in your life?

- ▶ Try: organising something, cleaning or tidying, solving a puzzle, setting a target time (e.g. saying they won't harm for 15 minutes, and then if they can last, try another 15 minutes).

Do you feel numb or like a 'zombie'?

- ▶ Try: focusing on something like breathing, being around people who make them feel good, craft activities, make a photo collage, playing an instrument, baking, playing computer games.

Do you feel like you want to escape from your life or a difficult situation?

- ▶ Try: a hot or cold shower, drawing on the body with red pen, massaging lotion into the places they would normally harm, squeezing ice cubes or biting on lemon for the "shock factor," or painting nails.

(ChildLine, 2014)

Useful websites for information / Signposting/ Resources:

- ▶ For all ages:
- ▶ www.nwcounsellinghub.co.uk
- ▶ For young people up to 19yrs:
- ▶ www.childline.org.uk
- ▶ <https://selfharm.co.uk/>
- ▶ <https://youngminds.org.uk/>
- ▶ <https://www.papyrus-uk.org/> - suicide prevention under 35yrs
- ▶ Adults:
- ▶ <https://harmless.org.uk/>
- ▶ www.mind.org.uk
- ▶ www.lifesigns.org.uk/first-aid-for-self-injury-and-self-harm/
- ▶ <https://hubofhope.co.uk/> - list of local services
- ▶ <https://stayingsafe.net/> - safety plans / suicide support
- ▶ <https://giveusashout.org/get-help/>
- ▶ <https://www.samaritans.org/>
- ▶ <https://www.selfinjurysupport.org.uk/>

Covid adaptions - telephone / remote sessions

- ▶ Listen for changes in tone of voice
- ▶ Can you hear something isn't right
- ▶ Do they mention an 'injury' or 'incident'
- ▶ Listen for 'invitations'
- ▶ If online - are they looking away from the screen, do they look uncomfortable or in pain (emotionally or physically)
- ▶ Longer pauses than normal
- ▶ If not sure ask the question - even if no history of self-harm

MY DETAILS

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