

Lesson 1

Understanding the term 'self-harm'

Resources

Quiz:

Myth Buster, page 7

Photocopy one sheet per pupil

Flash cards:

Self-harming behaviours, page 8

Photocopy and cut up one set per group

PowerPoint presentation:

Understanding the term 'self-harm'

Available from the DVD to support content delivery

Leaflets:

Available from the National Self-harm Network, www.nshn.co.uk

Download and print. Consider making this information easily accessible to all pupils, inside and outside of the classroom

PDF:

Digital copy of Lesson 1 teaching notes

Available from the DVD for print and sharing purposes

Teaching point 1:

Pupil learning intentions (1 minute)

- I understand the meaning of self-harm
- I recognise the possible life events that could lead to self-harm

Teaching point 2:

Keep Safe (1 minute)

Set the ground rules for the discussion to create a safe and open environment.

Suggested script:

Over the next couple of weeks we will be discussing the topic of self-harm. This can be a very sensitive issue for some people. During these lessons you are expected to be supportive and respectful of others.

If the content of these lessons gives rise to any concerns, anxieties or worries you should feel free to approach a teacher, school nurse or any member of staff you feel comfortable talking to if you need help or advice.

In the final lesson we will be looking at organisations that can offer advice in this area. However, information will be made available after each lesson for you if you feel you wish to talk to someone in private. You will also be able to find this information online and in the library.

Activity 1:

Myth Buster quiz

(5 minutes)

The Myth Buster quiz is designed to gauge knowledge and attitudes at the start of the On Edge programme. The answers will be provided in Lesson 4 so pupils will need to keep their quiz sheet safe. It is recommended that teachers collect the quiz sheets and return them to the pupils during Lesson 4.

Instruct pupils to complete the quiz on their own without discussion. Allow a maximum of five minutes to complete it.

Quiz answers

1. False; 2. False; 3. False; 4. False; 5. False; 6. False;
7. False; 8. False; 9. False; 10. False; 11. False;
12. Bored, Depressed, Upset, Confident, Guilty,
Frustrated, Angry, Confused, Lonely, Anxious, Hopeful,
Tired, Desperate, Happy, Fulfilled, Relaxed

Teaching notes: Overview of self-harm

Read prior to commencing Activity 2 with pupils
The following themes are likely to emerge in discussion.

Cutting and burning are the most obvious types of self-harm but they are certainly not the only ways in which a person may self-harm.

Whether or not something could be regarded as self-harm may depend on the extent to which a person behaves in this way, e.g. exercising and comfort eating can be positive or harmless things, but when taken to the utmost extremes can be very harmful.

Another important factor is why the person is doing it and what they are getting out of it, e.g. working hard may be something a person needs to do, but sometimes people 'bury themselves' in work as a way of avoiding feelings or problems.

Classing something as self-harm may depend on how socially acceptable it is, rather than on how harmful it is. Drinking is generally quite socially acceptable but someone who habitually drinks to deal with their problems can do themselves considerable harm.

Some things we do to our bodies, e.g. body piercing or dieting may be seen as 'beautifying' but can become forms of self-harm. This all depends on the reasons why a person does them, e.g. out of self-hatred or for self-punishment.

Self-harm can be non-physical e.g. excessive self-criticism or worrying.

Risk taking can be another form of self-harm. Activities such as driving fast and fighting may seem more of a danger to others but can sometimes be a way of placing oneself in danger. Again, the reasons a person does this are important.

We all need to find ways of coping with life and its stresses. We all tend to do things at times which can become harmful if done habitually or to extremes. People who self-harm more directly are, in essence, no different and can be understood in the same way.

Activity 2:

Flash cards

(15 minutes)

The aim of Activity 2 is to get pupils thinking about what self-harm is and when certain behaviours might become self-harming.

Divide the pupils into groups of four or five and give each group a set of flash cards. Allow pupils 5 minutes to discuss in their groups which of the behaviours they would regard as 'self-harm', and which they would not. This should generate a great amount of discussion as many of the behaviours do not fit in to one particular category.

Ask each group to present to the class one behaviour they would class as 'self-harm' and one behaviour that they would not. Ask them to give an explanation for both.

Allow 10 minutes for this part of the activity, which should generate discussion around behaviours, their context, intent and whether or not they have a positive or negative impact on people's lives.

Activity 3:

Life events discussion

(10 minutes)

Ask the class what life events could lead to self-harm? Prompt with examples such as: divorce or separation, someone close to them dying, a relationship breaking up or bullying.

Before pupils start to respond, remind the class of the 'Keep Safe' rules agreed at the start of the lesson.

Activity 4:

Definition

(5 minutes)

Working on their own, without discussion, ask pupils to quickly write down a definition of self-harm. Allow a maximum of 2 minutes for this.

Once pupils have completed this task, read or display (PowerPoint) the universally accepted Basement Project definition. Ask pupils to write this down next to their suggestion. Again allow a maximum of 2 minutes for this.

The Basement Project definition of self-harm:

“Any act which involves deliberately inflicting pain and/or injury to one’s own body, but without suicidal intent. It is usually an attempt to stay alive in the face of great emotional pain”.

The Basement Project is an organisation that has provided a service to people who use self-harm as a coping strategy. To find out more information visit their website, www.basementproject.co.uk

Before dismissing the class remind pupils of the Keep Safe rules.

Myth Buster quiz

Pupil name:

Class:

1. People who self-harm are attempting suicide True False
2. People who self-harm are attention seeking True False
3. If you ignore someone's self-harm they'll stop True False
4. Only young people self-harm True False
5. Everyone who self-harms has been abused True False
6. Only people with mental health problems self-harm True False
7. Stopping self-harm is easy True False
8. Self-harm is the latest craze with young people True False
9. People who self-harm need to be seen by a doctor True False
10. Talking about self-harm makes it worse True False
11. Cutting is the only form of self-harm True False
12. People self-harm when they feel (circle as many as you agree with):

Bored

Depressed

Upset

Confident

Guilty

Frustrated

Angry

Confused

Lonely

Anxious

Hopeful

Tired

Desperate

Happy

Fulfilled

Relaxed

Flash Cards

Gambling	Cutting or burning
Using drugs	Dieting
Driving fast	Working hard
Drinking	Smoking
Comfort eating	Body piercing
Exercising	Fighting
Worrying	Risk taking