



Mental Health  
Support Team  
Buckinghamshire

# Self-Harm & Emotion Regulation Parent Workshop

Steph Davey

Education Mental Health Practitioner



# TAKE

CARE OF

YOURSELF

WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO  
GET OUT OF THIS SESSION?



# WHAT WE WOULD LIKE YOU TO GET OUT OF THIS SESSION:

- Think about what self-harm is and why young people may self-harm
- Try to understand what it feels like to be a young person who is self-harming
- Understand what can be helpful and unhelpful when talking to a young person
- Think about alternative ways to cope

# OVERVIEW FOR TODAY



1. Understanding self-harm
2. Conversations with young people
3. Offering practical support

# OVERVIEW FOR TODAY



1. **Understanding self-harm**
2. Conversations with young people
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# WHAT COULD SELF-HARM LOOK LIKE?



# PREVALENCE



Around  $\frac{1}{4}$  of all 11–16-year-olds with a mental health disorder have self-harmed at some point.

This increases to nearly half of young people aged 17-19 with a mental health disorder.

Rates have risen most sharply in young females.



# LGBTQ+ YOUNG PEOPLE AND SELF-HARM

- LGBTQ+ youth are up to **4x more likely** to self-harm than their heterosexual peers
- Symptoms appear to worsen during adolescence and early adulthood



# SELF-HARM CAN BE:

- Direct or indirect
- Transient or longer term
- It is usually conducted at times of anger, distress, fear or worry and is a way of coping with these feelings



# INDIVIDUAL FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH SELF-HARM

- Depression/anxiety
- Low self-esteem
- Poor problem-solving skills
- Hopelessness
- Impulsivity
- LGBTQ+
- Gender Dysphoria
- Learning Difficulties
- Drug/alcohol abuse



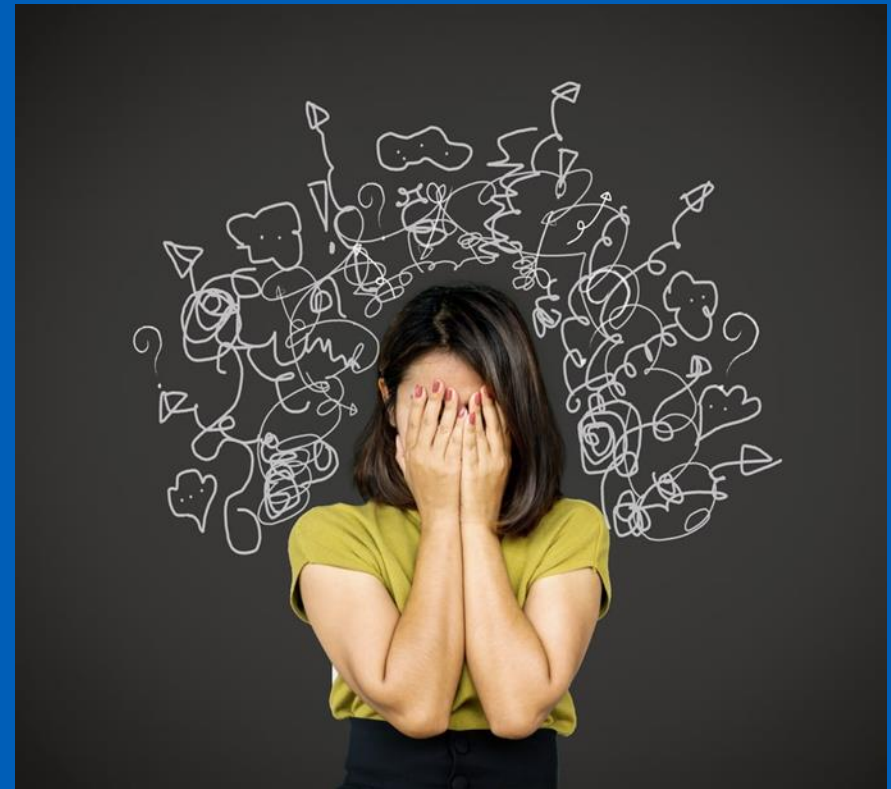
# SOCIAL FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH SELF-HARM

- Loneliness
- Difficulties with peer relationships
- Easy availability of drugs/alcohol



# COMMON TRIGGERS

- Relationship difficulties
- Adverse life events
- Trauma
- Bullying
- Self-harm in friends/the media
- Pressure (e.g. exams)



# WHY DO YOUNG PEOPLE SELF-HARM?

**Emotional pain**  
(sadness, grief,  
hopelessness,  
depression)

**Self-hatred**  
(shame, guilt,  
dirtiness)

**Anger**  
(frustration,  
powerlessness)

**Anxiety**  
(fear, tension,  
panic)

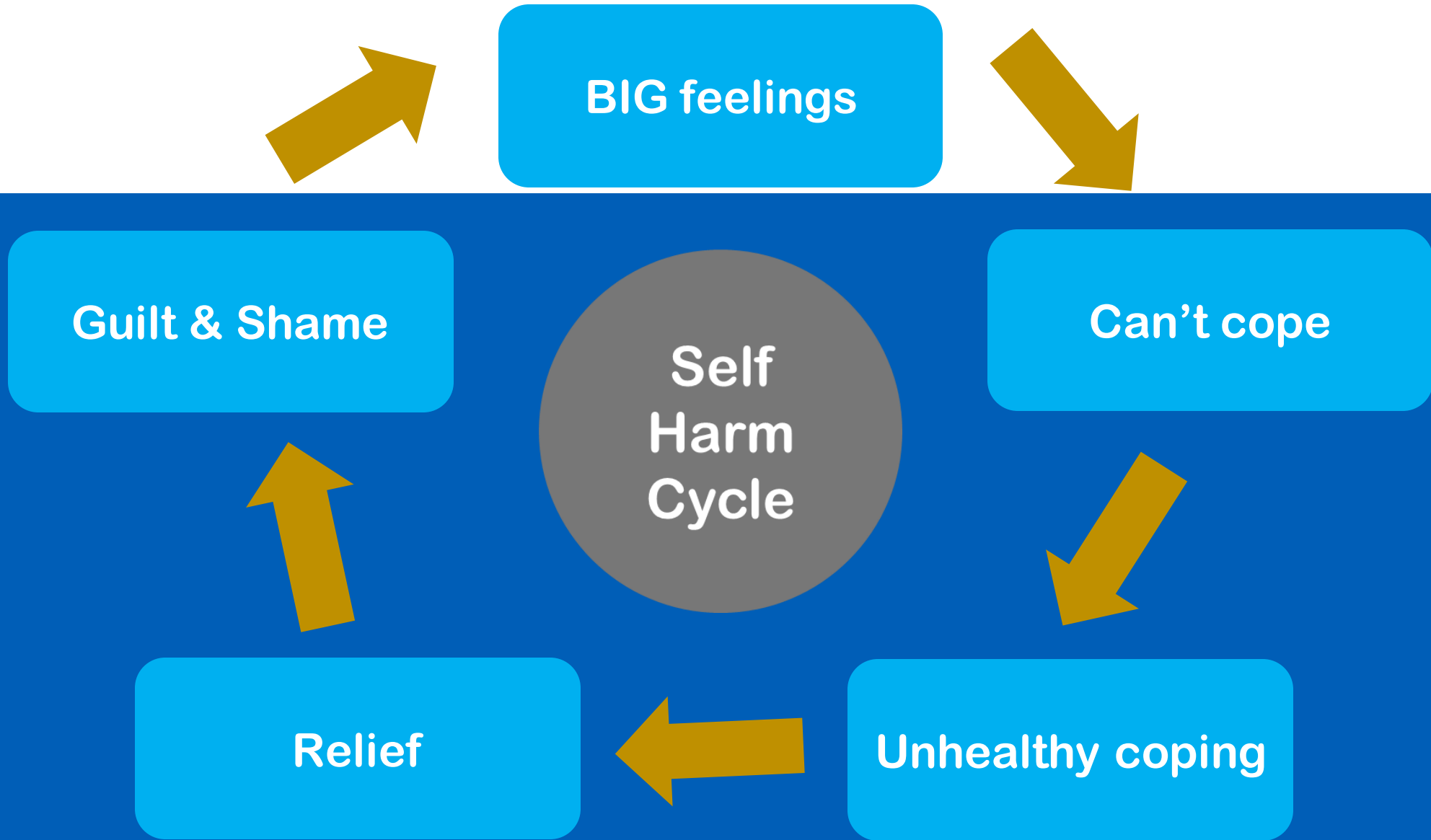
**Neediness**  
(unsupported,  
unheard)

**Unreality**  
(numbness, Empty)



# REASONS WHY I'VE SELF-HARMED

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rmLNnSITd4o>





# WHAT WARNING SIGNS CAN WE LOOK OUT FOR?

- Secrecy or disappearing at times of high emotion
- Long or baggy clothing even in warm weather
- Increasing isolation or unwillingness to engage
- Avoiding changing in front of others
- General low mood or irritability
- Negative self-talk – feeling worthless, hopeless, or aimless



# SELF-HARM & SUICIDE

- Young people who self-harm are not necessarily suicidal
- However, people who do not intend to kill themselves sometimes do so because they don't realise the seriousness of their injuries
- People who self-harm are more likely to report suicidal ideation than non-self-harmers (83% vs 29%)



# SELF-HARM & THE INTERNET

## The Bad

Normalisation

Triggering

Competition

Contagion



## The Good

Crisis support

Reducing social  
isolation

Therapeutic use

Outreach

# OVERVIEW FOR TODAY



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# SEEKING HELP

- This is usually really difficult for YP
- Seeking help is often the first step in breaking the cycle and sharing the experience can be a huge relief
- How others react influences whether the YP seeks further help
- YP need to feel comfortable with who they speak to



# YOUNG PEOPLE RARELY SEEK HELP...

9% of young people seek help before engaging in a self-harm episode

Around 12% seek help after an episode

**So, how can we respond in the most supportive way?**

# RESPONDING TO SELF-HARM

**Making the YP  
the sole focus of  
your attention**

**Listening, not  
talking**

**Do not guess or  
assume**

**Respond calmly,  
even if you don't  
feel calm**

**Project  
acceptance and  
support, not  
judgement**

**Do not dismiss as  
attention seeking**

**Recognise how  
difficult it must  
have been for YP  
to share this**

**Next steps?**

# SOME QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER...

- Is there an immediate need for medical care?
- Is the young person a danger to themselves?
- What message do you want to give to the young person?



# STARTING A CONVERSATION

## 1. Pick the right environment

Going for a walk

Getting a coffee

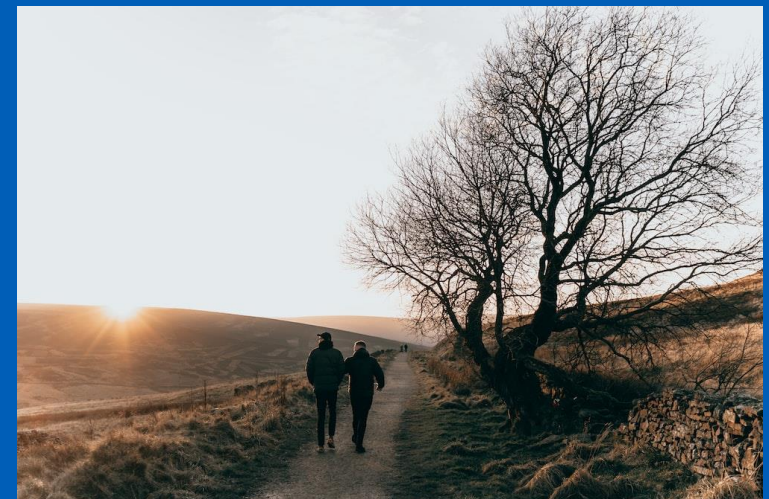
Going for a drive



# STARTING A CONVERSATION

## 2. Pick the **right time**

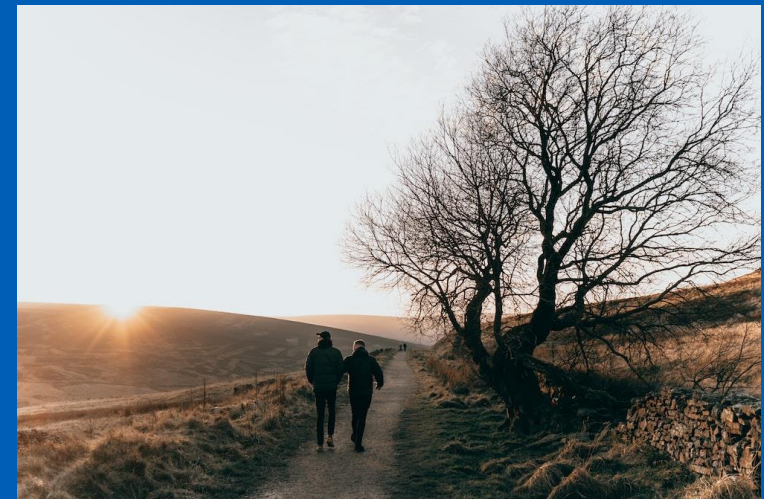
When everyone is calm



# STARTING A CONVERSATION

## 3. Ask open questions

I've noticed \_\_\_\_\_. Is there anything you'd like to talk about?



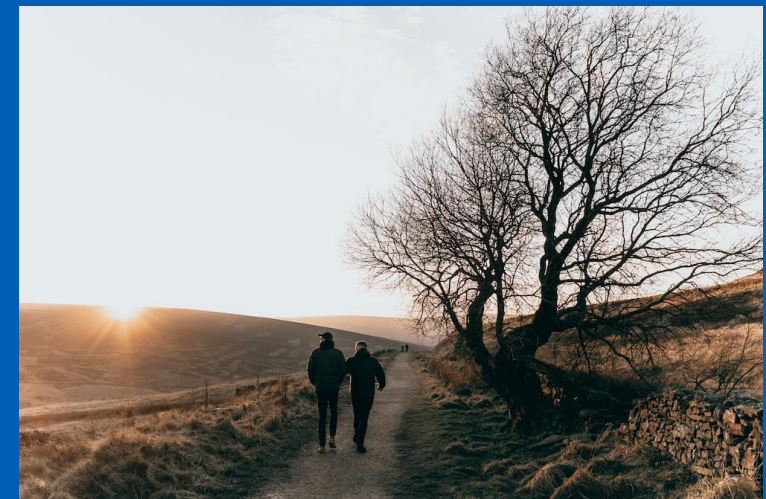
# STARTING A CONVERSATION

## 4. Helpful phrases

Take your time, there is no rush. I know it can be difficult to talk about this

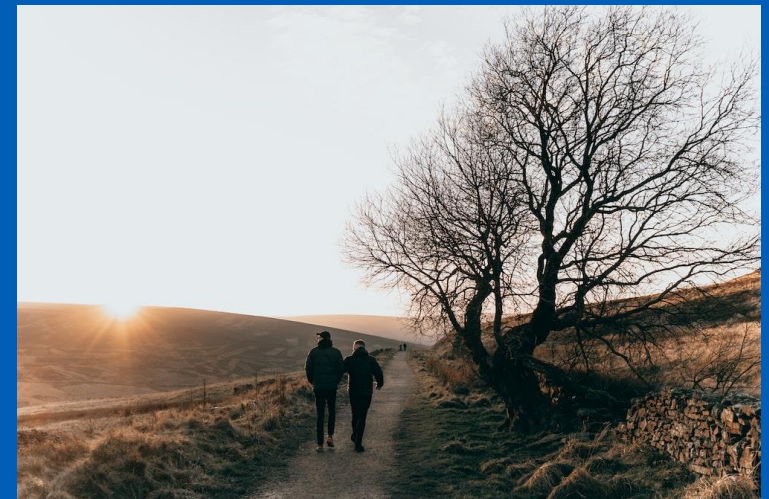
I'm here for you

What can I do to help?



# STARTING A CONVERSATION

1. Right environment
2. Right time
3. Open questions
4. Helpful phrases





Ferdi Rizkiyanto

Showing you're not afraid to talk about the specifics of self-harm can feel very supportive to the YP

# IS IT IN THE YOUNG PERSON'S BEST INTEREST TO SHARE THIS INFORMATION?



If Yes

What? How?

With Who?



If No

Why not?

# WHAT CAN BE HELPFUL?



**Thanking the young person for sharing this information**

**Showing that you care about them as a person**

**Discuss confidentiality**

**Asking how you can help**

**Staying calm**

**Giving the young person permission to talk about the self harm**



# WHAT CAN BE UNHELPFUL



**Telling them  
that self-harm  
is wrong**

**Agreeing to  
unrealistic  
plans**

**Focusing only  
on the self-  
harm**

**Giving  
ultimatums or  
applying  
pressure**

**Giving a  
negative  
reaction**

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

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# IDENTIFYING A YOUNG PERSON'S TEAM

- What friends and family can the YP talk to
- Identify helplines YP can message or call
- Is there someone at school the YP can go to



# THINK WITH THE YOUNG PERSON OF OTHER WAYS THEY MIGHT 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

# THERE ISN'T A 'ONE SIZE FITS ALL'

The reason why a young person feels an urge to self-harm can impact what alternative coping strategies might help.



# WHY DOES THE YOUNG PERSON WANT TO SELF-HARM?

Maybe they...

- ...Need to vent their feelings
- ...Feel down or alone
- ...Need a distraction
- ...Feel out of control
- ...Need some space to think
- ...Need to feel more in control

# ALTERNATIVE COPING STRATEGIES

Pick one or two initially, try them out, and review:

- Was it helpful? Did it work?
- Would you use it again?
- What else could you try?



# EMOTION DYSREGULATION

## HYPO AROUSAL:



### EXTREME DISTRESS:

- slowed breathing
- flat affect
- dissociation

## HYPER AROUSAL:

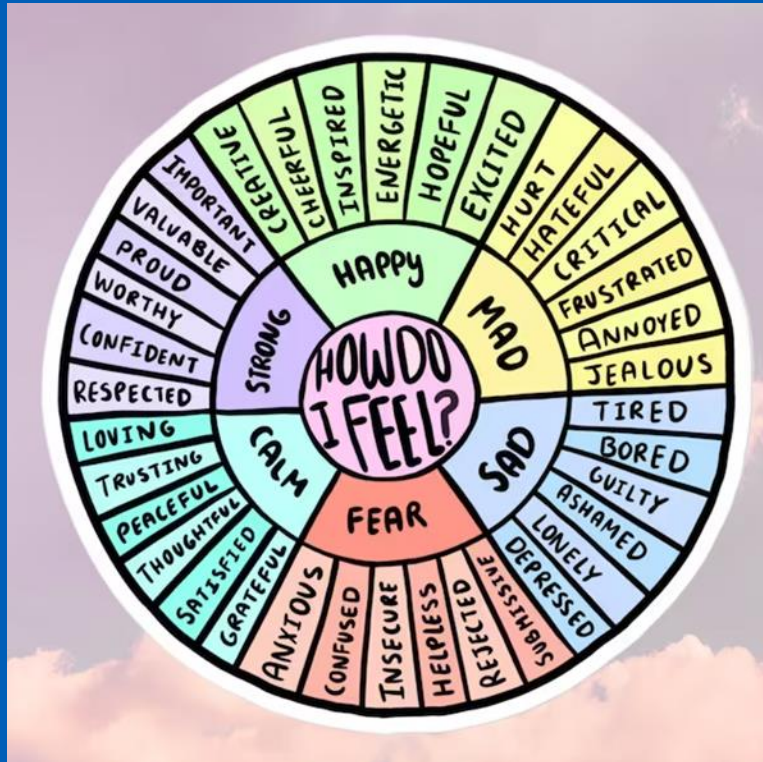


### EXTREME DISTRESS:

- hyperventilating
- extreme emotion
- panic attack

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# HOW CAN WE HELP YOUNG PEOPLE MANAGE EMOTIONS



- Model managing our own emotions
- Build nurturing, emotionally validating relationships
- Encourage sitting with emotions rather than dismissing them
- Name emotions

# HAND MODEL OF THE BRAIN



At the base of your brain, represented here by your wrist, is the brain stem. It's responsible for basic things like breathing and keeping your heart pumping.



Your thumb, folded in, sits in the middle, just like the amygdala in the brain. The amygdala is responsible for sensing danger and telling the brain + body.



Your fingers are like your pre-frontal cortex- that's the part of the brain that helps us manage emotions and make complex decisions



When fear, danger, or intense emotion overwhelm our amygdala our prefrontal cortex goes offline and we "flip our lid." That's why sometimes it is so hard to make thoughtful decisions when we are very upset.

When brains are overwhelmed like this, they need a break to reflect and reconnect.

Using some of the  
alternative coping  
strategies, can help us 'close  
the lid' by calming the  
amygdala.

# SELF-SOOTHE BOX



# SUMMARY: HOW YOU CAN HELP

- Arrange appropriate medical care
- Listen to the young person and be mindful of your reactions
- Provide access to information
- Tell other people (where appropriate)
- Talk about other coping strategies and offer practical advice

# REFERRALS



If you feel your child needs specific mental health support above what is already offered by Student Support Officers, then please use the following emails to contact support within the school:

## **Great Marlow School**

Karen Craig - [kcraig@gms.bucks.sch.uk](mailto:kcraig@gms.bucks.sch.uk)

Sheryl Paul - [spaul@gms.bucks.sch.uk](mailto:spaul@gms.bucks.sch.uk)

## **Sir William Borlase's Grammar School**

[safeguarding@swbgs.com](mailto:safeguarding@swbgs.com)

They can refer you to us (Mental Health Support Team).

# CAMHS

**Child and Adolescent  
Mental Health Service**

- Referrals for higher level and more persistent mental health needs
- Urgent referrals: Single Point of Access (SPA): 01865 901 951 (8am–6pm, Monday to Friday)
- Less urgent referrals:  
[BucksCAMHSSPA@oxfordhealth.nhs.uk](mailto:BucksCAMHSSPA@oxfordhealth.nhs.uk)



# INFORMATION AND SUPPORT FOR PARENTS

## Young Minds

- For more information and signposting
- <https://www.youngminds.org.uk/parent/parents-a-z-mental-health-guide/self-harm/>



## NSPCC

- Can call them for free support and advice on 0808 800 5000 or can contact them online.
- <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/childrens-mental-health/self-harm/>



# INFORMATION AND SUPPORT FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

## Childline

You can confidentially call, chat online, or email about any problem.

## Young Minds

You can text YM to 85258 for free, 24/7 support.

## Samaritans

Open 24/7. You can call them on 116 123 or email them at [jo@samaritans.org](mailto:jo@samaritans.org)



# INFORMATION AND SUPPORT FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

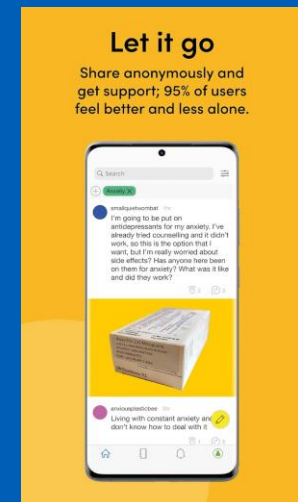
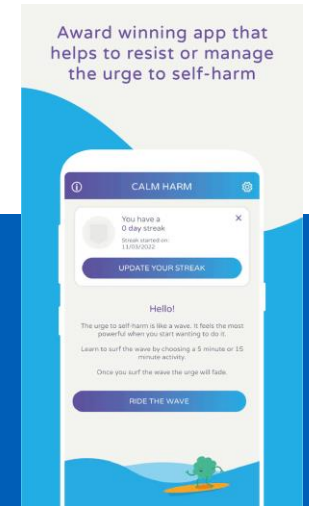
Apps like:

## Calm Harm

A free app providing support and strategies to help you resist or manage the urge to self-harm.

## Tellmi

A free app for teenagers (11+) providing resources and a fully-moderated community where you can share your problems, get support and help other people too.



## MHST - Parent Training/Workshop





Mental Health  
Support Team  
Buckinghamshire

Thank you for listening