



Self-harm Workshop

Gemma Fieldsend

Raising awareness fighting depression



“Don’t
give up
you are
not
alone”

“it’s important to not feel
alone”

Self-harm

- Self-harm is a common coping mechanism for young people who turn to it as quickly as other generations might have used drugs or alcohol to manage difficult feelings
- It can be a reaction of a broad range of issues, most of which are unrelated to our parenting
- Parent

Parents Experience

“Having found out my child was self-harming I was so devastated and confused as to why. My emotions were all over the place, not knowing how to help her, where to go for professional help - it was so stressful. As a father I just wanted to wrap her up in cotton wool.”



Parents experience

- If you've recently discovered that your child is harming themselves then you're probably experiencing a whole range of emotions. Parents commonly talk of guilt, shame, anger, frustration, sadness and disgust.
- ***“I felt I had failed as a parent. Every cut felt like confirmation of what a bad job I must be doing.”***

Parents experience

- As a parent you're in a great position to support your child's recovery.
- Acknowledge your feelings, perhaps by talking to a partner, friend or counsellor.
- Try not to focus on the past, instead think about how you can help make things change.
- Many parents grow closer to their children as they support their recovery.

Self-harm

Cutting, burning

Overdosing, consuming
poison

Scratching, banging

Punching, hitting, biting

Eating disorders, drugs,
alcohol

**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**

Is your child self-harming; warning signs

- Unexplained cuts, burns or bruises
- Keeping themselves covered; avoiding swimming or changing clothes around others
- Being withdrawn or isolated from friends and family
- Low mood, lack of interest in life or depression
- Blaming themselves for problems or expressing feelings of failure, uselessness, hopelessness or anger



Raising awareness (fighting depression)

What makes a young person vulnerable to self harm

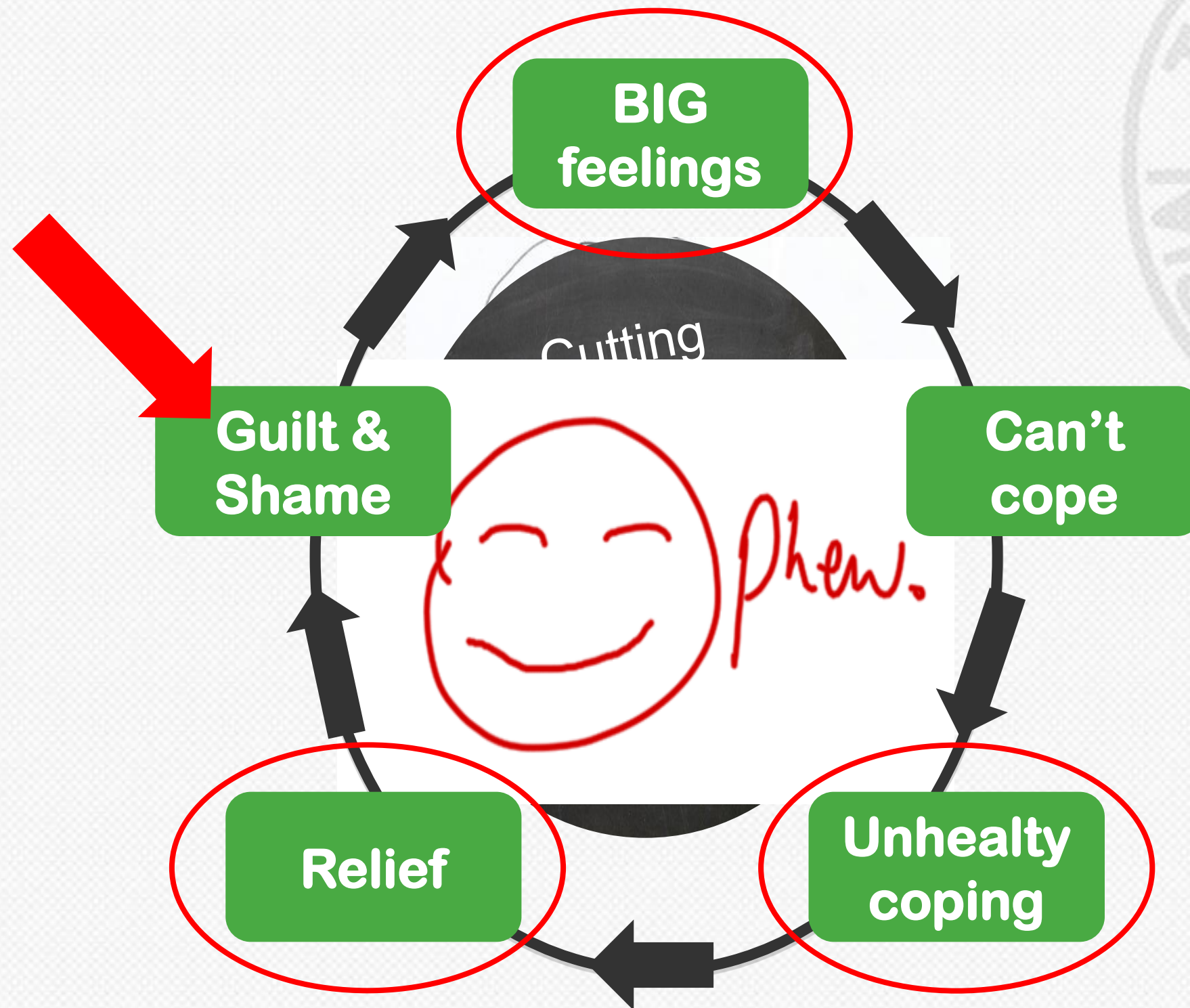
- **INDIVIDUAL FACTORS:** depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, bullying
- **FAMILY FACTORS:** mental health difficulties in the family, conflict between young person and parents, unreasonable expectations
- **SOCIAL FACTORS:** difficulties in peer relationships, bullying, peer rejection, media and internet influences



Why do people self-harm



- Control “I am 16. Every day of my life I’ve been told what to do from the moment I wake up to the moment I go to sleep. This is just my secret way of asserting a bit of control in my life”
- Release and communication of feelings “I’m not good with words. I’m good at cutting”
- Physical rather than emotional pain “It was a physical expression of the emotional pain I was feeling but couldn’t begin to explain”
- Punishment “If I didn’t do as well as I’d hoped I would then take a load of pills and go to sleep”
- Nowhere else to turn “It’s the only thing that makes me feel better”



Supporting your child, some tips

- Have a conversation, but don't bring up self-harm straight away
- Organise this around another activity, like a walk or a drive
- Ask if there is anything worrying them and how they are feeling
- Help them think through their problems and see possible solutions
- Show that you are prepared to listen to what your child has to say
- *“ we worked out that if she sent me a blank text, I knew that she needed some company or a cuddle or some distraction”*

No Harm Done Video; Parents



Parents

Explores feelings

What to say

What to do next

Supporting
yourself

Further support





No Harm Done

Things Can Change

Information and help for young people worried about self-harm

Young People

By young people

Message of hope

Common
questions

Advice from YP

Finding help

Raising awareness fighting depression

Alternatives to suggest

Write or draw about feelings

**Contact a friend,
family member,
helpline**

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

**Hit a pillow / soft
object**

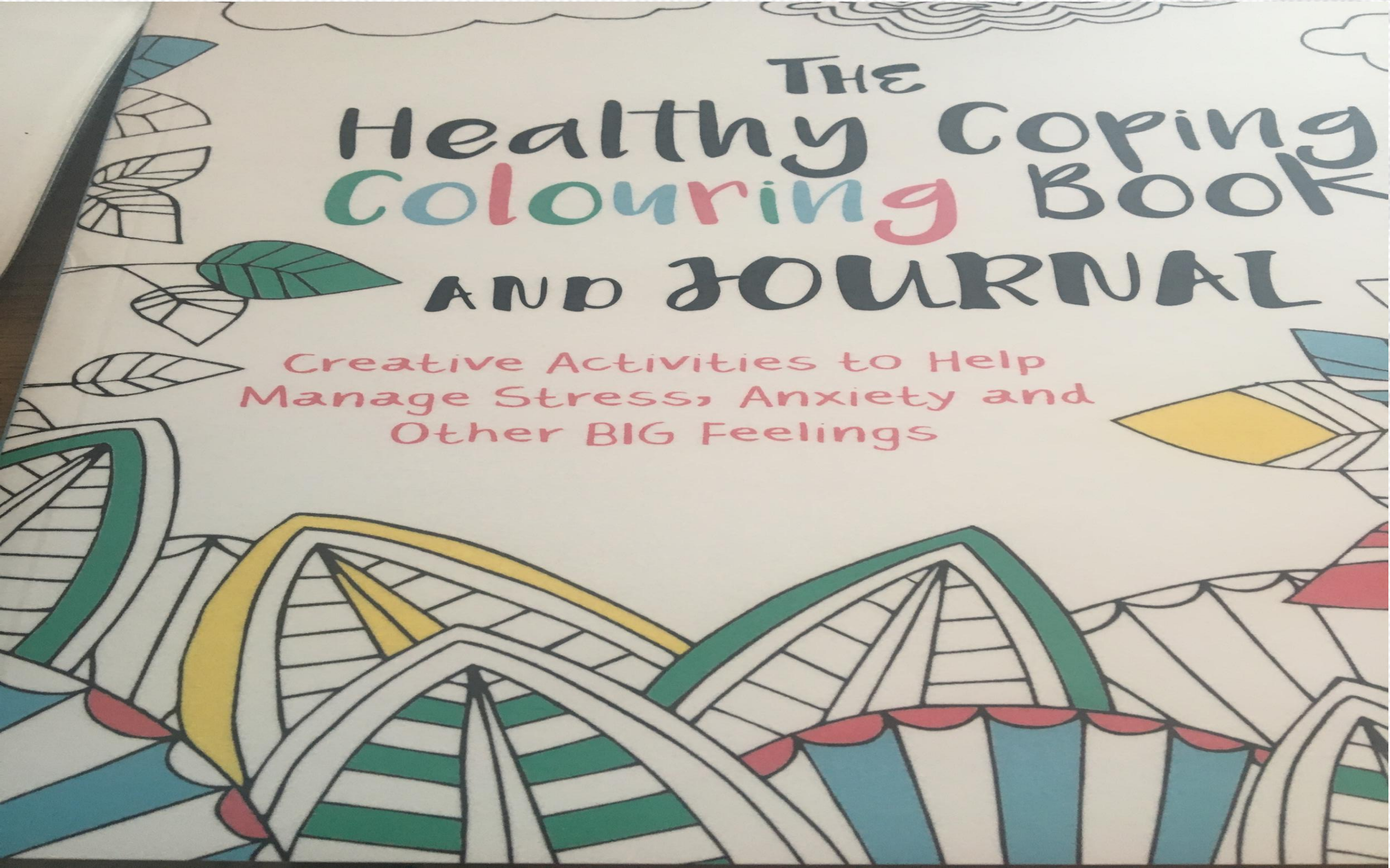
Listen to music

**Look after an animal
or sibling**

**Draw red lines on
the skin**

Clench ice cubes

**Snap elastic band on
wrist**



THE Healthy Coping Colouring Book AND JOURNAL

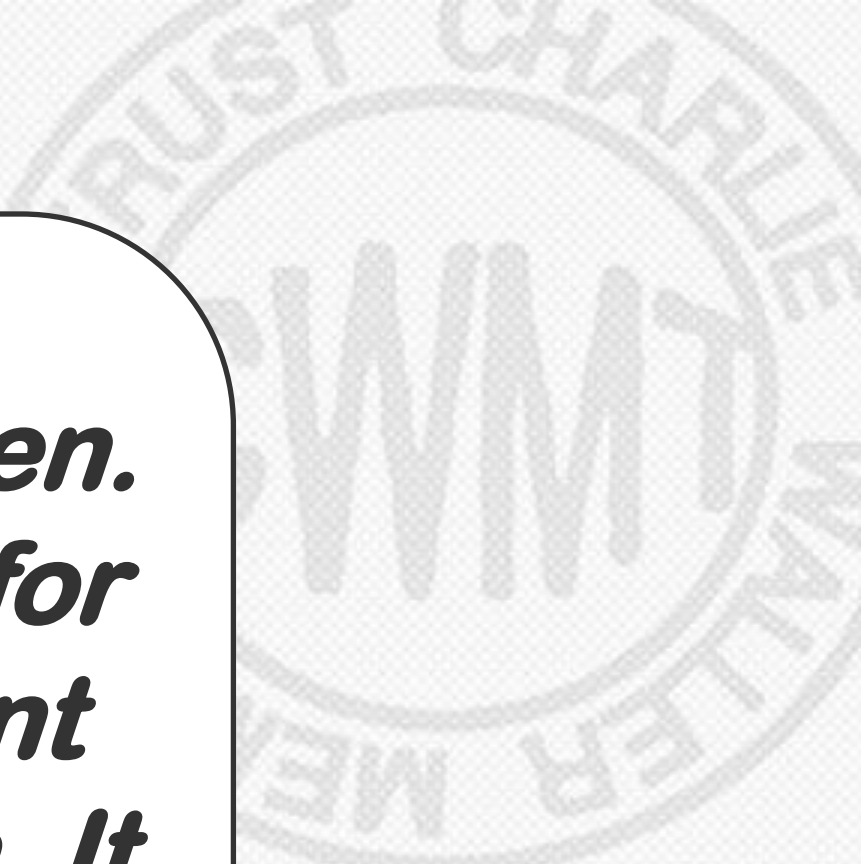
Creative Activities to Help
Manage Stress, Anxiety and
Other BIG Feelings

Attending to your own needs and other family members

- It's important that you look after yourself and the rest of the family as well as the child who is self-harming. If we're not physically and emotionally well then we're not in a good position to support those we care about.
- ***“We set aside time to let our hair down with our other son - he needs our attention and support too. This is stressful for him, he's very vulnerable. Besides, he deserves a little fun!”***

Don't give up

- **I'M WORRIED I'LL SAY THE WRONG THING**
- Many parents find themselves paralysed with fear of saying the wrong thing to their child and so they say nothing at all.
- One time you should say nothing is if your emotions are running high - then it's best to give yourself space and time to calm.
- The rest of the time, even if you don't get it quite right, each conversation is a show of support for your child.



“My Dad took the time to listen. Really listen. He made time for me. I was the most important thing he had to do right then. It made me feel special and allowed me to open up to him.”

What if your child won't talk?



- Are you the best person?
- Start with small stuff
- Don't get angry
- Go for a walk / drive
- Signpost other support

DON'T GO IT ALONE

School



GP



Helplines



Forums

“I think I’m better able to cope with life’s ups and downs than many of my friends now because I’ve thought carefully about my response to difficult times.”

“As her parent I felt helpless until I realised there was a lot I could do. Even basic practical support seemed to make the world of difference to her stress levels.”

Despite our
best efforts,
some young
people
develop
unhealthy
coping
responses



No Harm Done Young Person Video Clip



Quote from young person

- *“If I could go back in time, I wouldn’t change it. It was really hard but it brought my parents and I closer together and it helped me learn ways to talk and to cope that I will use for the rest of my life.”*

#NoHarmDone

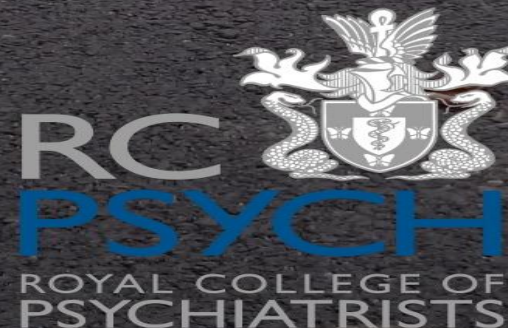
THANK YOU

Thank you to all the young people and parents that so generously gave their time and shared their experiences to make 'No Harm Done' a reality.

This pack was co-created with young people and parents and produced by:

YOUNG MINDS

The voice for young people's **mental health and wellbeing**



Raising awareness



fighting depression

Further Sources of Support

www.youngminds.org.uk

www.mind.org.uk

www.cwmt.org.uk

www.studentsagainstd Depression.org

www.inourhands.com

Thank you to CWMT!

- Charlie Waller Memorial Trust
- Provide materials and information about mental health and emotional wellbeing
- Deliver training and talks for young adults and young people and those who work with or care for them
- Sponsor research and teaching about evidence based therapies at the Charlie Waller Institute at the University of Reading