

# **Recognising, understanding and responding to self-harm**

January 2018





# Aim of the Session

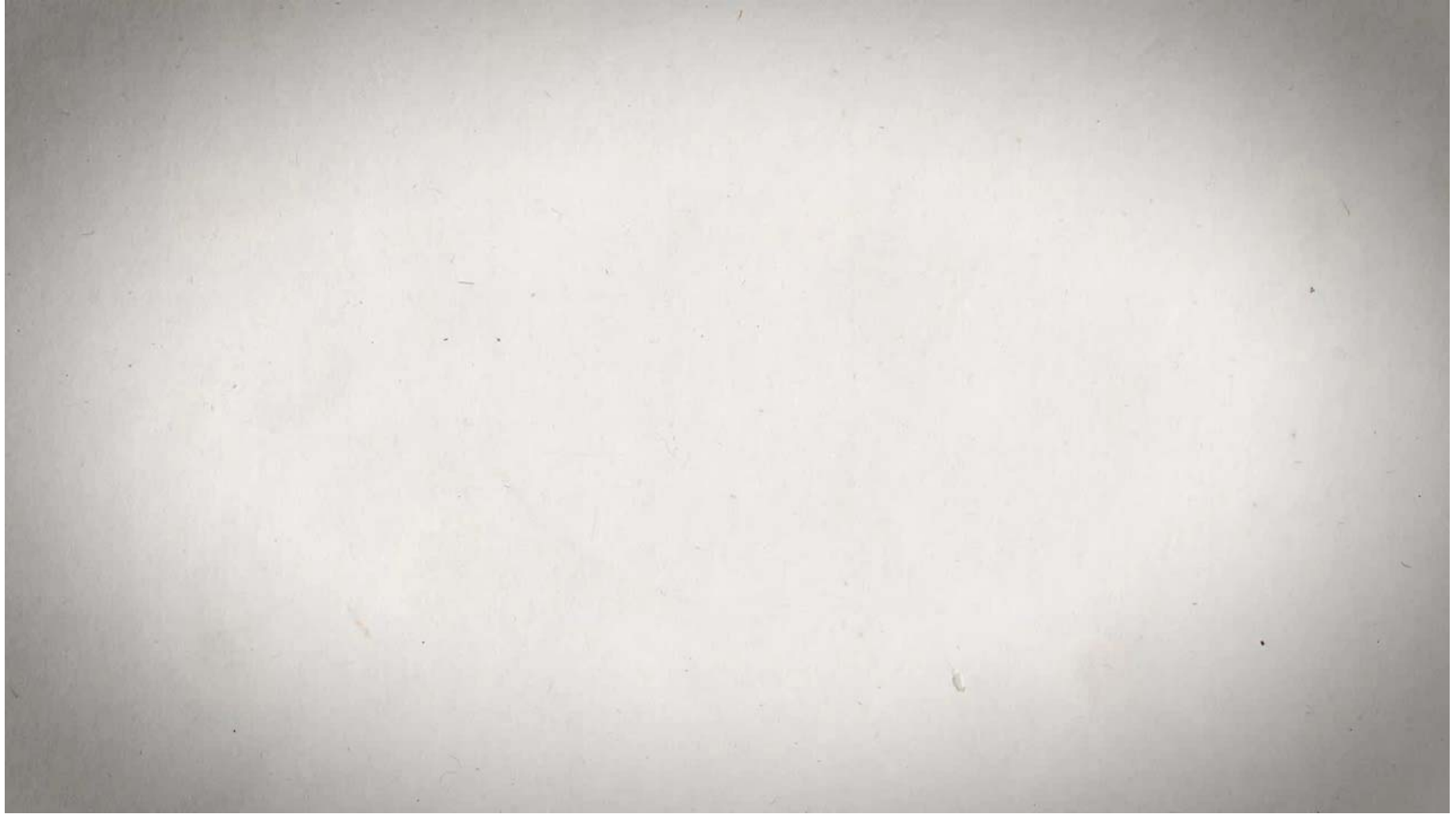
This session will help you understand:

What self-harm is

Why people harm themselves

Early warning signs to be aware of

How to respond appropriately and support recovery





What do we mean by  
self-harm?



# Task One

- In your table groups come up with some ideas on why you think children and adults self harm
- Please make two separate lists, one for children and one for adults

# Harm to oneself in order to cope

Cutting, burning,  
embedding

Overdosing, consuming  
poison

Scratching, banging,  
picking

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**

Put simply, self-harm is a coping mechanism

We're more understanding of other types...





## Teegan

Teegan hasn't told anyone about her self-harming because she thinks they'll dismiss it as attention seeking.

Is she right? How might a friend react?  
How might a member of staff react?

Is she right?

How might a friend react?

How might a member of staff react?

Record your ideas as a group

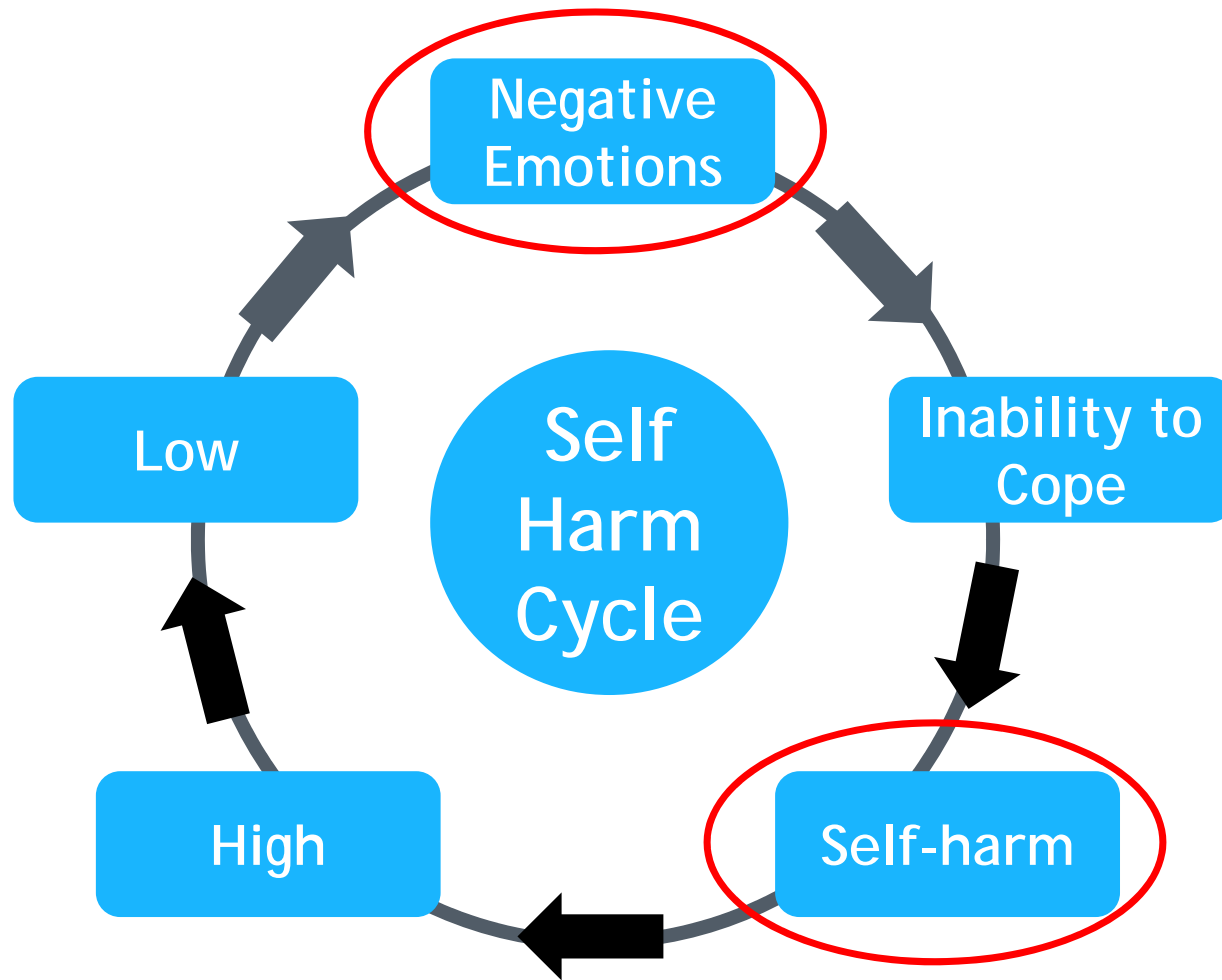



Attention seeking vs seeking  
attention or attention needing

**WHY**  
are they  
seeking  
attention?

**WHAT**  
are they  
trying to  
say?

**HOW**  
can we  
make their  
message  
heard?





Key signs we can look  
out for  
at school



## Physical Injury

Unlikely story

Repeated

Not accidental

Self-harm?



## Low Mood

Sensitivity to  
minor criticisms

Boredom

Isolation from  
usual social  
contexts

Tempers and  
irritability

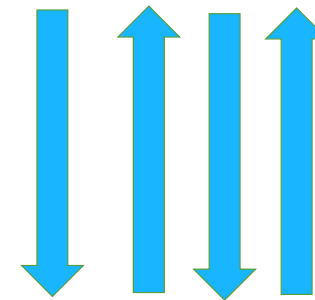
# Weight Change

Weight loss

Weight Gain

Weight

Fluctuation





Physical  
Symptoms

Nausea

Headaches

Stomach aches



Lateness  
or  
Absence

Anxiety

Low motivation

Compulsive behaviours



Low self-esteem

Feelings of failure

Hopelessness



Loss of interest

Unengaged in class

Drops hobbies

Withdraws from friends



WHY do people self-harm?

# Common triggers

Bullying

Exam stress

Failure

Bereavement

Break up


Friends or  
family

# Common Motivations

Control 

Punishment

Feel cared for

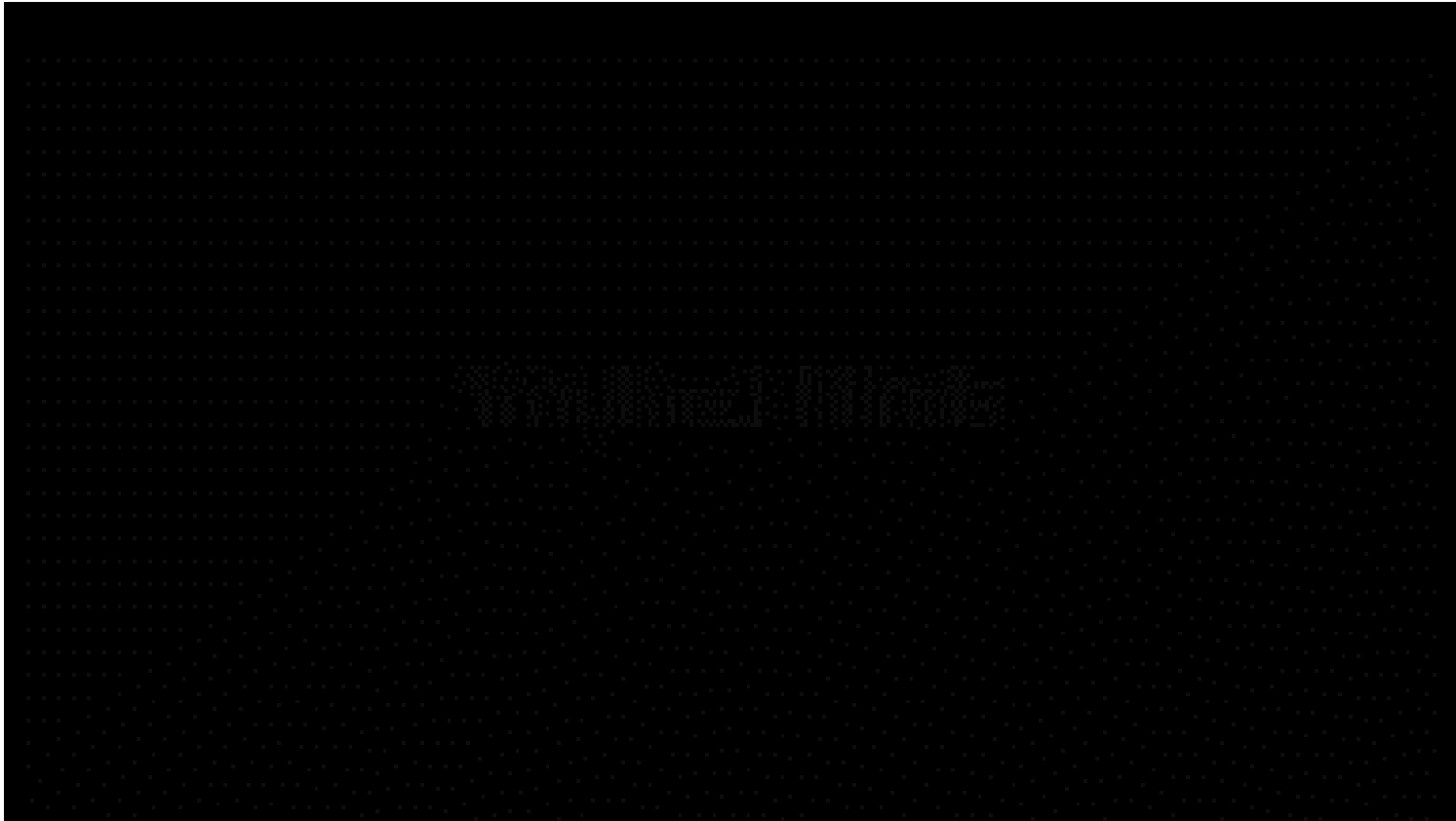
Physical vs   
emotional pain

Appear ugly

Feel real 



# Understanding self harm





# School Policies and Procedures

WHO to escalate concerns  
to






How can we help?



## Four Helpful Responses:

1

**LISTEN!**



*“He 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.”*



## Four Helpful Responses:

1

LISTEN!

2

Don't over react

How can  
I help?

Thank you  
for telling  
me

I care

What NOT  
to Say



OMG!

Why?

Stop...



## Four Helpful Responses:

1


LISTEN!

2

Don't over react

3

Offer practical support



# How can I help?

Allowed to  
leave class

Somewhere  
safe to go

Explain pupil  
might arrive  
late

Someone to  
talk to

Reduced  
timetable

Homework  
extensions



## Four Helpful Responses:

1

**LISTEN!**

2

Don't over react

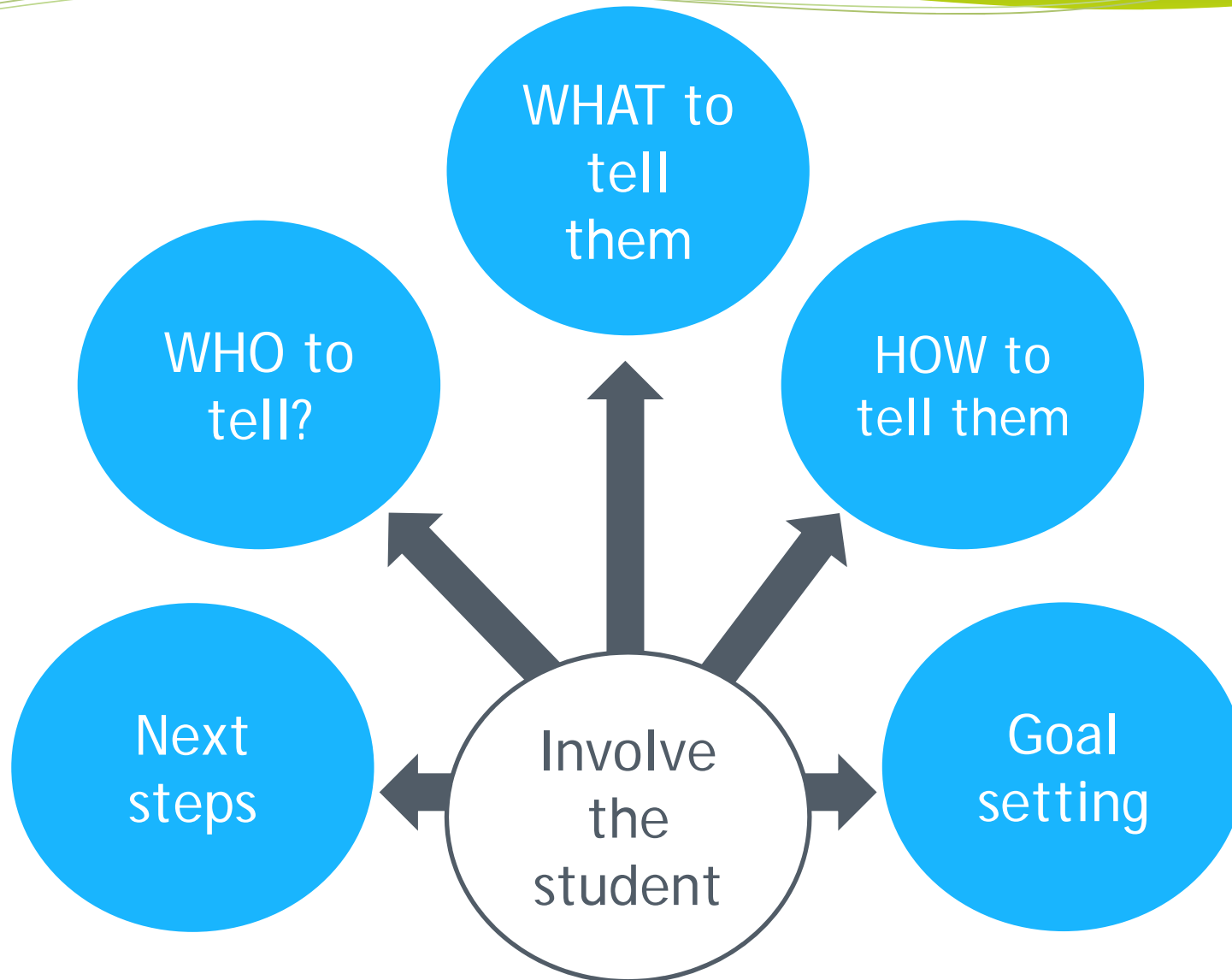
3

Offer practical support

4

Involve the student in decisions





If you remember 3 things...

1

Self-harm is  
a coping  
mechanism

2

Trust your  
gut. If  
you're  
worried,  
follow up

3

LISTEN &  
ask 'How  
can I help  
you?'

# Why?

- The picture is bleak.....
- The number of children and young people self-harming has risen dramatically in the past 10 years
- The number of girls treated as inpatients after cutting themselves has almost quadrupled from 600 in 2009 to 2,311 in 2016– a 285% rise
- Self-harm reported to GPs among teenage girls under the age of 17 in the UK increased by 68% over just three years
- Girls are twice as likely to self harm as boys particularly between the ages of 10-12
- Nearly 19,000 children and young people in England and Wales were hospitalised for self-harm last year