

Working with young people who self-harm.

This workshop will empower participants to give emotional and practical support to young people who harm their bodies. It is aimed at anybody who works with young people: teachers, health professionals, those involved in PSHE, counsellors, head teachers, school nurses, probation officers, youth offender support teams, teaching and medical staff in colleges and universities.

A person who mutilates their own body, wounding the skin and drawing blood, is feeling so helpless and confused that they are unable to find any other way of managing the mental anguish and chaos that arises from their unmanageable emotions.

This goes far beyond adolescent angst; self-harm shows that the mind has slipped away from its ordinary perspective, losing sight of pain and danger, in order to commit an act that will bring an immediate solution to emotional pain.

Learning methods of the workshop will include an analysis of the primary causes and symptoms of self-harm. There will be time for personal reflection to allow participants to explore their own self-harming tendencies, such as smoking, driving too fast or not using sunscreen, which will better equip them to understand and contain self-harm in young people. Case studies will be used to bring theory to practice and increase confidence. Participants will have a space to explore their own reactions and learn practical skills to support young people who self-harm.

The workshop will include:

Definition of deliberate self-harm
How physical pain drowns out emotional distress
Who is at risk?
Primary causes of self-harm
Characteristics of self-mutilators
Why do young people harm themselves?
Triggers that cause self-harm
Warning signs
Recent research
Clinical study
Participants' case material
Help for the helpers
Sources of referral
Creative ways to help
Resources: books, help-lines, websites