

# Identify, Understand and Respond

## Definition of Self-Harm

**Intentional self-poisoning or injury irrespective of the apparent purpose.**  
(National Institute of Health and Care Excellence).

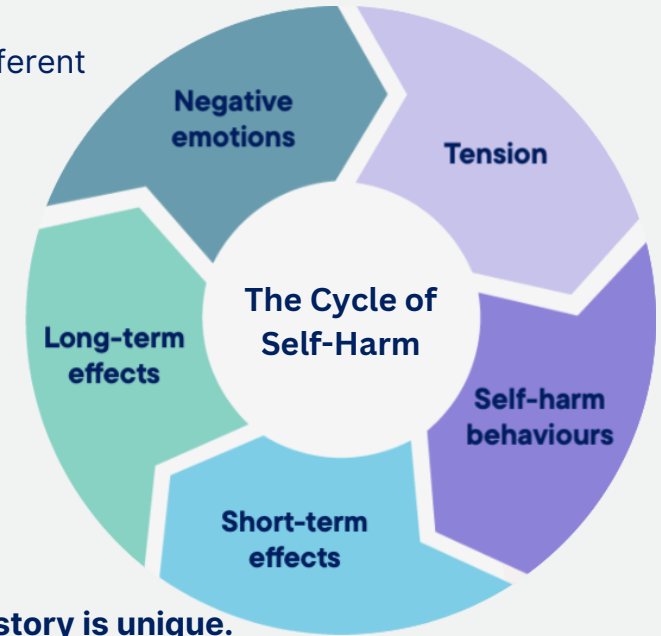
## You can make a difference

**All forms** of self-harm **require attention**, regardless of their physical severity - they should be considered as **indicators of distress**. Allowing a student to disclose to you can make a big difference.

## Why does self-harm happen?

A young person might self-harm as a result of different emotions or feelings including:

- Tension release
- Distraction
- Control
- Self-punishment
- Feeling alive or real
- The physical feeling
- Communication
- Lack of Belonging
- Averting suicide



**All reasons are valid and every young person's story is unique.**

## What to do if you need to respond to self-harm:

Familiarise yourself with your school's safeguarding procedures. Consider which colleagues you would tell and seek support from.



### Identify

Identify the full range of self-harm behaviours that a student may engage in.

### Understand

Understand that students may engage in self-harm to manage their distress.

### Respond

Respond calmly and with empathy. Tell a colleague and seek support.

## How can you help?

If a student discloses self-harm to you, remember to **stay calm, actively listen** (whilst demonstrating open body language and maintaining eye contact) **and recap** what the student has told you.

Following the disclosure, **tell a colleague** and connect the student to **additional support**.