

Managing self-harm

A young person's guide to understanding
and coping with self-harm



What you'll find in this workbook

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Introduction

This workbook has been created to support young people aged between 11-17 who have self-harmed.

The aim of this workbook is to help you to understand more about self-harm and consider your own individual relationship with self-harm.

Self-harm can be a difficult topic for people to talk about, and we hope this workbook helps you feel more confident and prepared in these conversations. You can look through this workbook by yourself, with a parent, carer, or someone that you trust in school or college.

Different sections of this workbook will be helpful for different people; we have included activities, information, and space for your own thoughts, ideas and reflections throughout.

This workbook will help you to:

- Understand your own triggers for self-harm.
- Set your own goals to manage, reduce or eliminate self-harm behaviours.
- Develop ways to manage your emotional wellbeing.
- Find ways to delay the urge to self-harm.
- Know what to do if you do self-harm.
- Develop a support plan including key people in your social network.

Picking up this workbook is a massive first step so you should be proud of yourself. Take your time working through it and see what works for you.

Throughout the workbook we have included exercises to help you reflect and problem solve. These exercises are optional and there are no right or wrong answers to them

Please note that this workbook is based on up-to-date NICE Guidance and should not be used to substitute an assessment or treatment by a health care professional.

If you are reading this and you have self-harmed or feel unable to keep yourself safe, please go straight to page 24.



Exercise one: Initial reflection

I'm using this workbook because I want to...

Chapter one: Learning about self-harm

Sometimes young people may feel upset or distressed when hearing about self-harm, especially when discussing different methods of hurting yourself. If you feel this may be distressing for you, speak with a trusted person who can support you.

What is self-harm?

Self-harm is when someone hurts themselves on purpose rather than by accident. There are lots of different ways that people self-harm, for example cutting or burning yourself, but also less obvious methods such as under eating or over exercising. If you are doing something that damages your body or hurts you, this is self-harm.

Who self-harms?

Self-harm can affect people at any stage of life. It's difficult to say how many young people are self-harming, because lots of people don't share this information with anyone. Here are some stats from YouGov and The Mix (2020).

Almost **1 in 3 (32.8%)** aged 17–24-year-olds have self-harmed or attempted to self-harm. Which then rises to 69.5% for young people with a probable mental health condition.

Girls are more likely to self-harm, but this may be due to **boys** using less obvious means of self-harm (e.g. punching walls or getting into fights where they know they will be hurt).

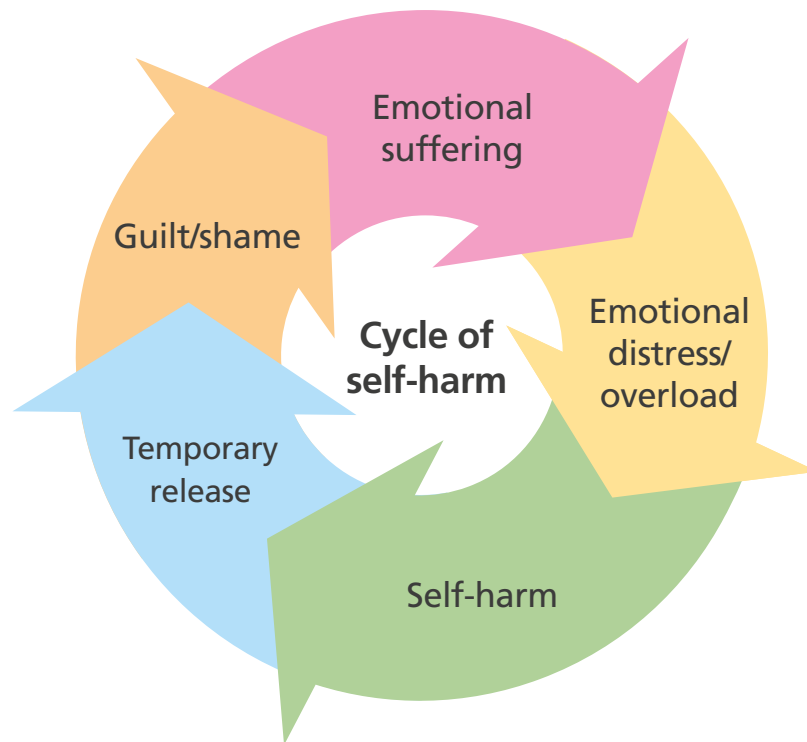
1 in 4 young people who have self-harmed felt unable to tell anybody.



LGBTQIA+ young people ages 13-17 reported significantly higher rates of self-injury in the past year (63%) compared to their peers ages 18-24 (41%).

Why do people self-harm?

Self-harm doesn't have just one cause. For many, it serves as a coping mechanism to deal with intense emotions or situations. Some individuals self-harm to relieve overwhelming thoughts, while others do it to ease stress and tension. It can also be a way to express feelings like hurt, anger, or frustration that might be difficult to put into words. Additionally, some people self-harm to regain a sense of control when emotions or problems feel overwhelming.



People start to self-harm for a variety of reasons. Below are lists of common reasons why someone might turn to self-harm as a coping mechanism:

Major life events	Life experiences	Personal factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss, separation or bereavement. • Family breakdown. • Traumatic event, e.g. assault, fire, serious incident. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bullying. • Struggles with education. • Family/relationship problems. • Disability. • School/college problems. • Unemployment. • Accommodation problems. • Money worries or debts. • Parental mental illness. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mental health problems. • Lack of support or feeling isolated. • Alcohol and drug problems. • Difficulties with sexual identity. • Difficulties with gender identity.

What triggers self-harm?

Triggers are what create the urge to hurt yourself. They can be anything such as people, situations, anniversaries of events, specific thoughts or feelings. There doesn't have to be one specific trigger, but they will usually involve some emotional distress.

For example:

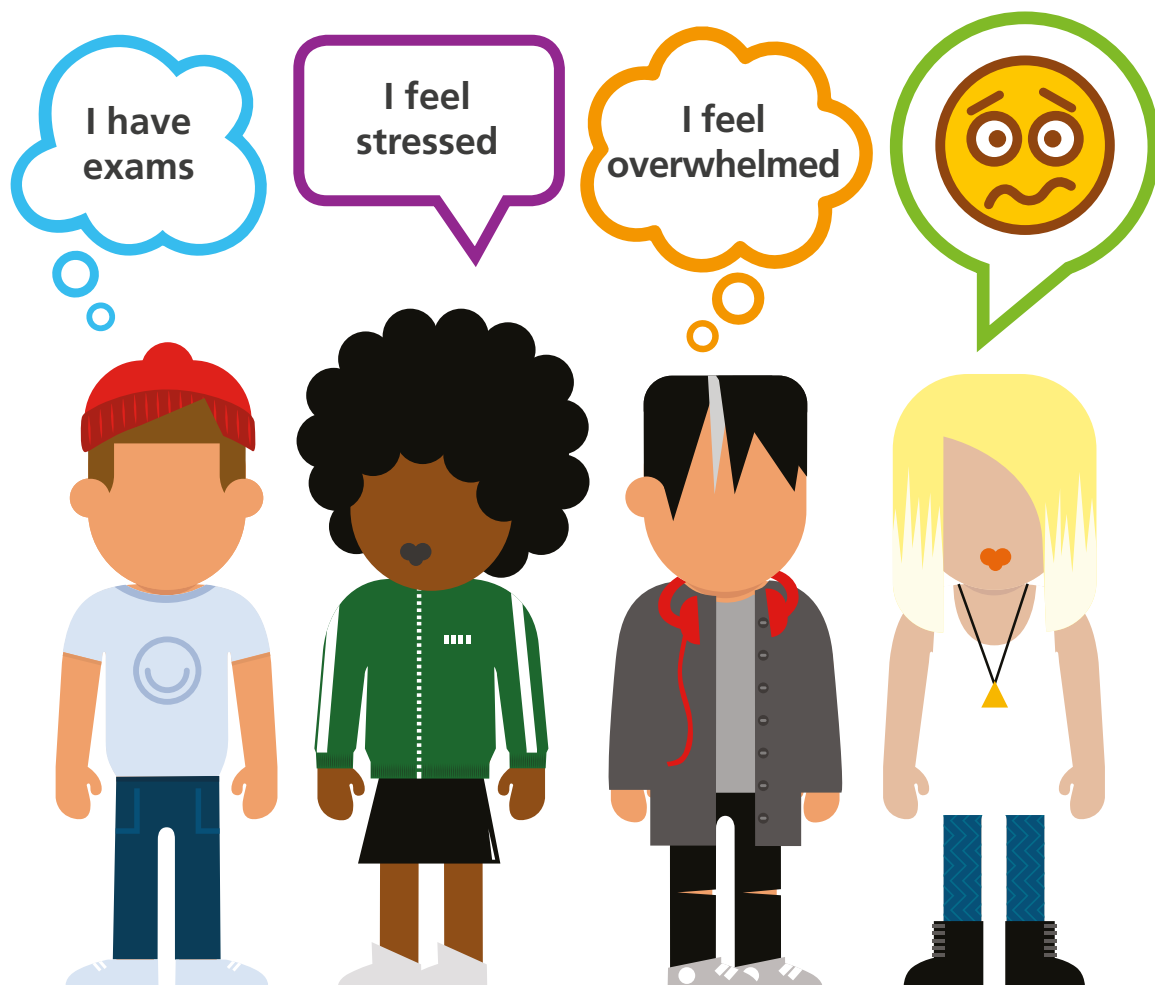
- Difficult relationships with family and/ or friends.
- Loss, separation or bereavement.

- Bullying, social media pressure.
- School or college problems.
- Anxiety, low mood, and low self-esteem.

Paying attention to why you've self-harmed can feel difficult and overwhelming. Identifying triggers is an important step when you are wanting to manage, reduce or eliminate self-harm behaviours. It is important to think about what is happening in your life, your thoughts and your feelings before you self-harmed and how you felt afterwards. To help support with the next exercise, please take some time to reflect on any past or current incidents where you have self-harmed.

Please consider the following:

- Did you have any specific thoughts or feelings?
- What time of day did you feel triggered?
- Did a situation, person or object remind you of something difficult?
- What urges did you experience?
- How did you feel after you self-harmed?



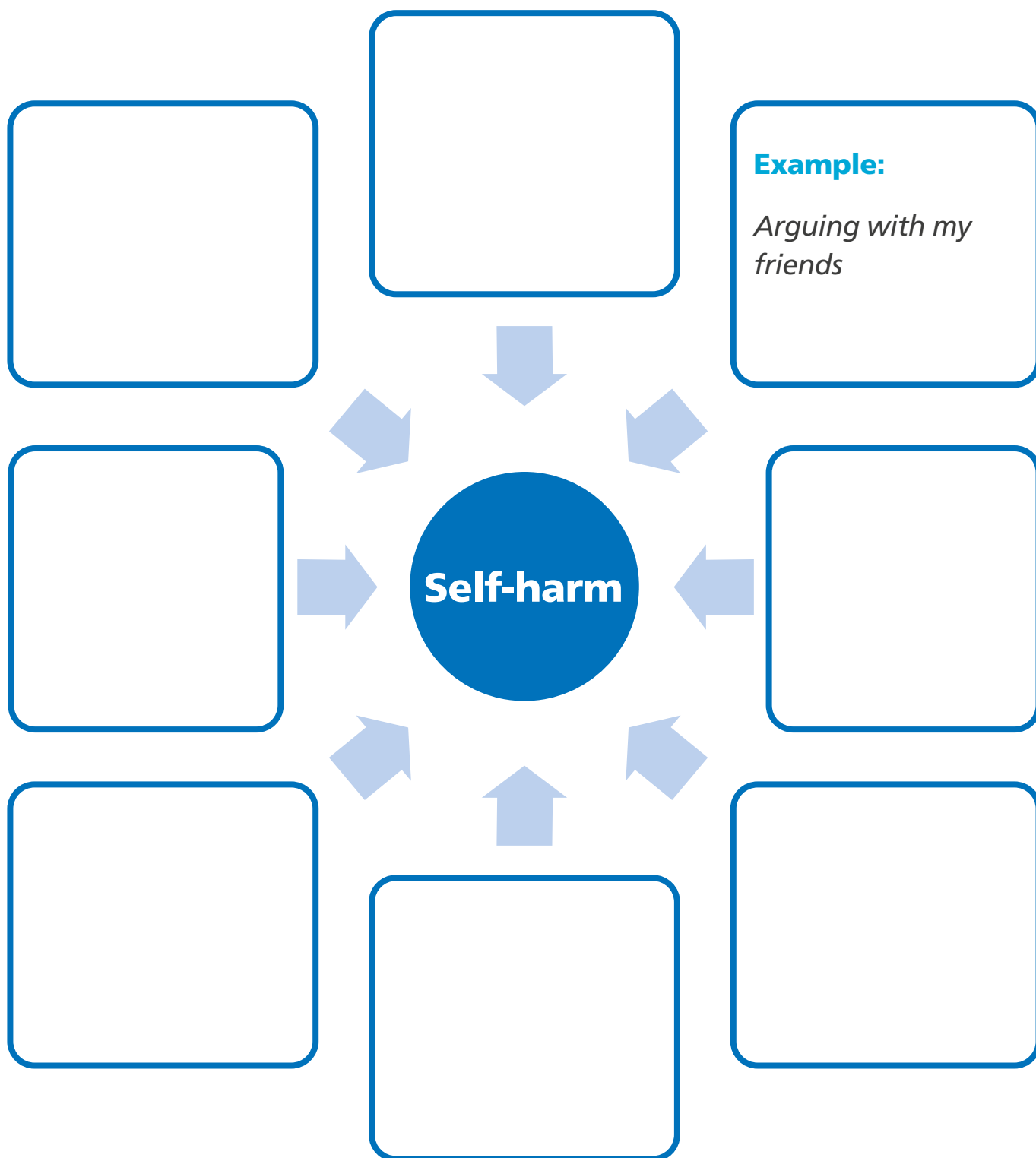
Chapter two: Understanding my self-harm

Knowing my triggers



Exercise two

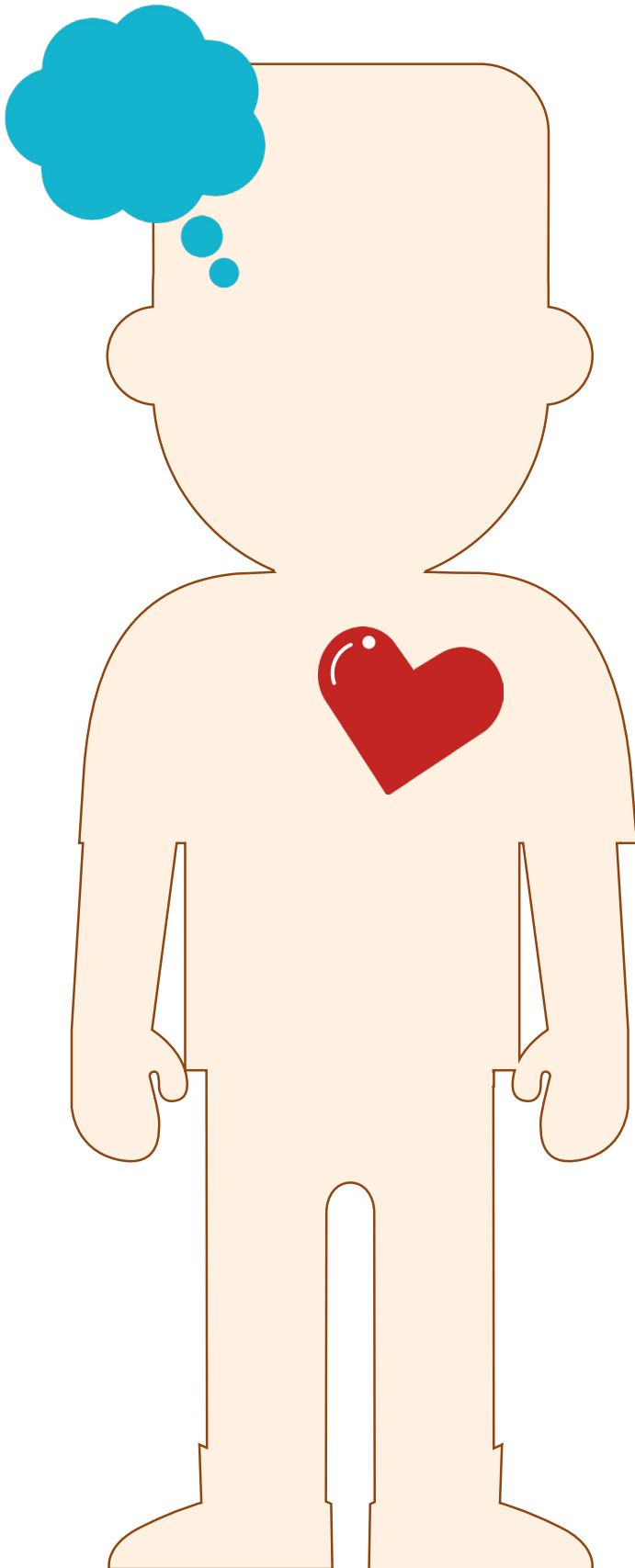
From the information discussed in this chapter, please draw or write what different factors make you likely to self-harm.





Exercise three: Body map

Illustrate the body map by drawing or writing to show what thoughts, feelings and behaviours you experience when you self-harm.



Thoughts

-
-
-
-
-
-

Feelings

-
-
-
-
-
-

Behaviours

-
-
-
-
-
-



Exercise four: Pros and Cons of my self-harm

Pros	Importance to me 1-10 (10 being very important and 1 being not very important)	Cons	Importance to me 1-10 (10 being very important and 1 being not very important)



Exercise five: Is there anything that already helps you not self-harm?



Exercise six: My aims and goals

When working through this booklet, it is important to consider why we are doing so. This page focuses on your goals and what you would like to gain from this booklet. Goals are a useful way to monitor your progress but also to consider if you need to take things a little slower. A useful tip to help with this is making your goals **SMART**:

- S – Specific** What is it you want to achieve?
- M – Measurable** Goals can sometimes be tricky to track, is there a way to monitor if it is being achieved?
- A – Achievable** Is this something you feel is doable?
- R – Realistic** Is your goal you realistically feel able to do?
- T – Timely** How long do you want to give yourself to achieve this goal and does this feel manageable?

Sometimes it can be helpful to have short-term and long-term goals, but there is no right or wrong approach. Think of a goal or goals that works for you!

Goal:
Example: *To reduce the amount that I self-harm*

Goal:

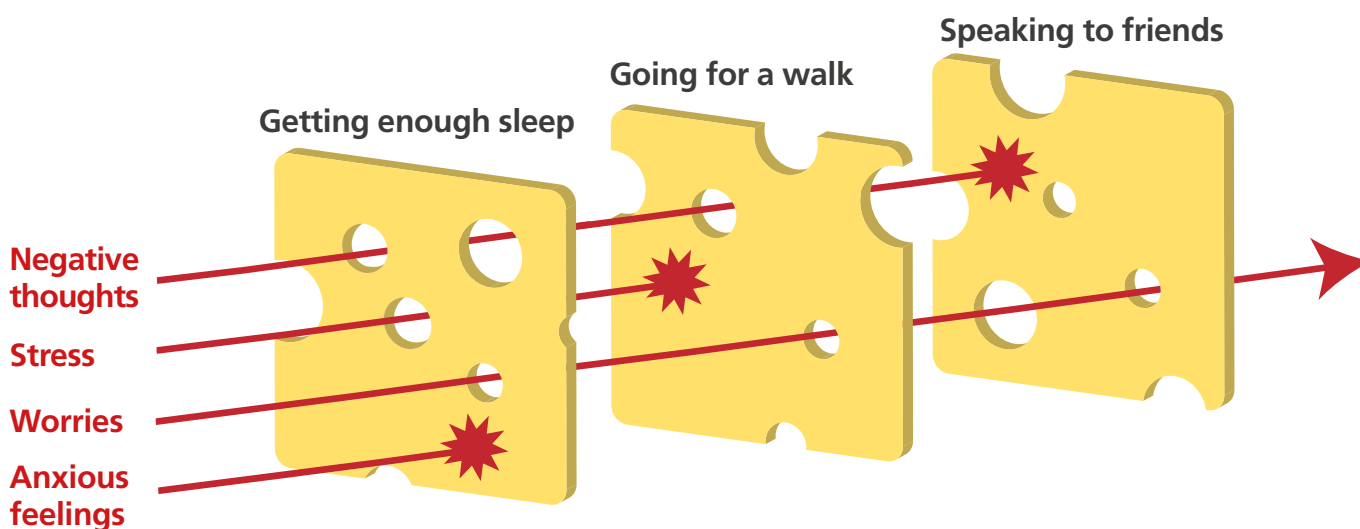
Goal:

Chapter three: The importance of looking after your wellbeing

Studies show there are five ways to good wellbeing, these are simple things you can do to boost your mental health and feel better overall. Giving them a try might help you feel more positive, confident, and ready to make the most of life.



Looking after your wellbeing and learning new ways to cope is important to build emotional resilience especially when faced with difficult emotions and situations. By building a tool kit of coping mechanism, you can manage the impact of these on your emotional health and wellbeing. A good way to show this is the 'Swiss Cheese Model' where it illustrates the importance of having multiple layers of coping mechanisms to support you because one strategy alone won't help you manage every emotion or situation.



Chapter four: Coping with self-harm

This chapter will equip you with lots of different ideas and suggestions of things that can help when the urge to self-harm arises.

These include:

- Techniques to soothe your body or change how your body is feeling.
- Techniques to distract from your thoughts/urges.
- Identifying your support network.
- Creating your own emotional tool kit.

Different strategies and techniques from this chapter will work for different people. Some might work better some days than others – it is important to try a variety and see what works best for you.

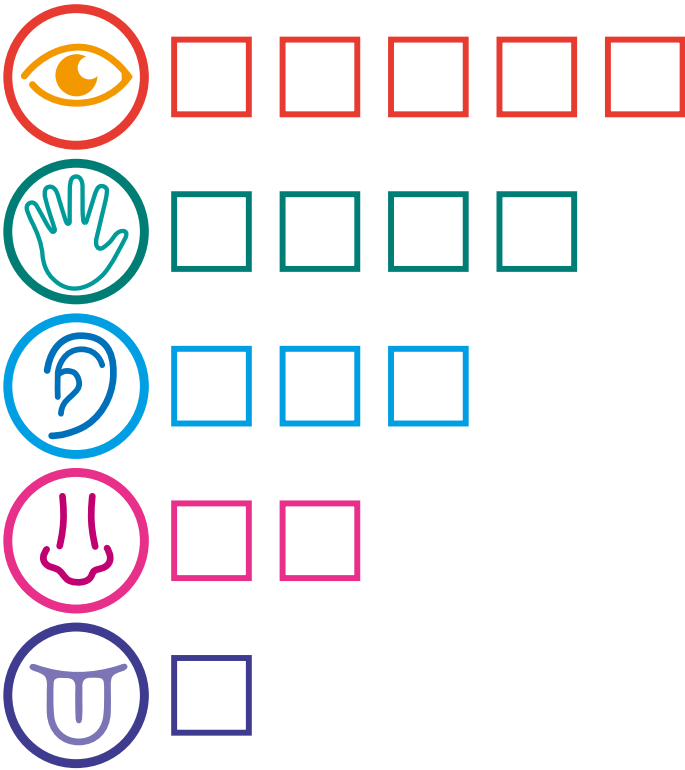
Think of managing the urge to self-harm like surfing a wave; rather than letting the wave pull you under (following the urge leading to self-harming), learn to ride out the feeling until it is in the distance behind you, like a surfer learning to ride a wave to the safety of the beach.

The strongest urges to self-harm typically last between 5-30 minutes.

If you can put off acting on the urge for five minutes by using one of the techniques from this workbook, amazing! Now, can you try and put it off for five minutes more? Can you make it to 30 minutes using different strategies from this workbook?

Mindfulness and relaxation exercises

Grounding techniques



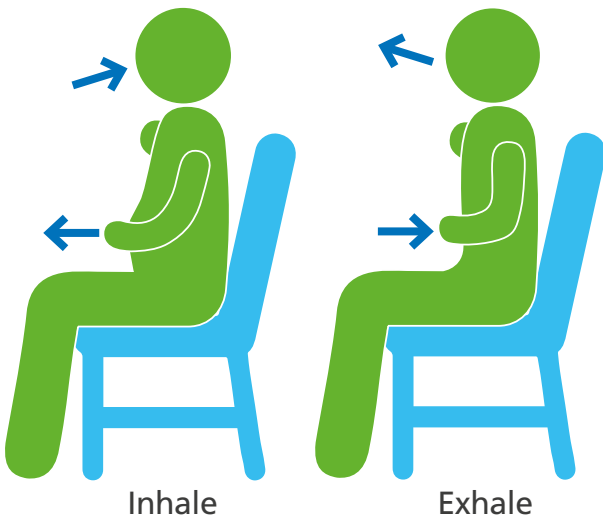
Deep breathing



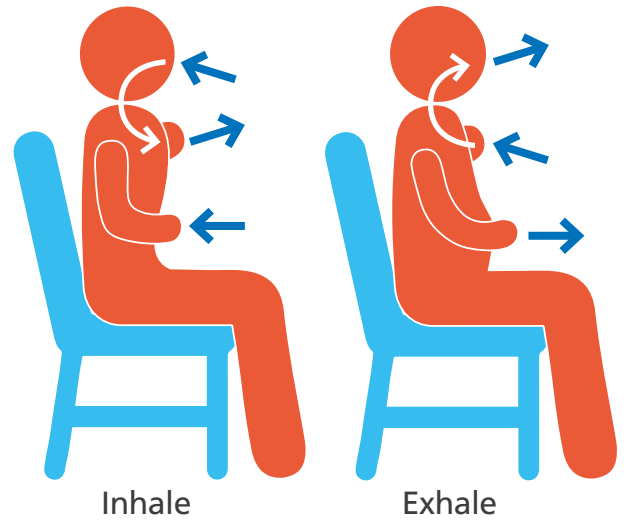
in **4**
hold **7**
out **8**

Diaphragmatic breathing

Right - belly breathing



Wrong - chest breathing



Distraction techniques

Distractions can redirect your focus to something else, which may help calm overwhelming thoughts. Everyone responds to distractions in their own way, what helps one person might not help another.

Physical distractions

- Sit in your garden or local park
- Go for a walk
- Go to the gym
- Dance
- Meet up with a friend
- Use a fidget or stress toy.



Creative distraction

- Drawing
- Painting
- Try out a new recipe
- Playing music
- Decorating.



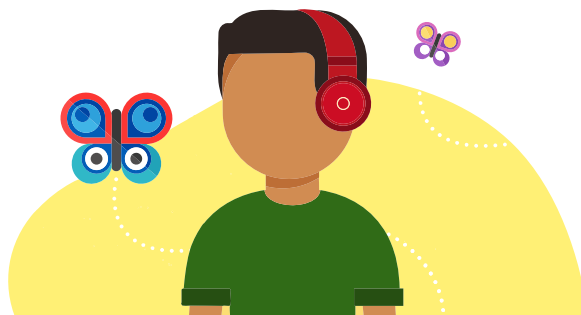
Productive distractions

- Make a to do list
- Clean your bedroom
- Organise your books
- Read a book
- Start a diary.



Soothing distractions

- Have a bath
- Wash your hair
- Do some skin care
- Paint your nails
- Listen to your favorite song
- Practice breathing exercises.



Self-soothing exercises

Mindful glitter jar

- Shake it up and watch the glitter falling whilst breathing deeply to help feel calmer.
- Easily made using an old jar, water and glitter. Can be used alongside breathing techniques, to slow breathing and shift focus outside of their thoughts.



Calm kit/relax box

- Filled with your favourite things, especially things that can help focus the senses.
- Great way to get creative, and to practice self-care and grounding.
- Can be used whenever you are feeling worried, stressed, sad, angry, or have urges to harm yourself.
- You could use an old shoe box or pick up a nice box from B&M, The Range or TK Maxx.
- The box could include a nice smelling body spray or candle, something soft to feel or squish, some photos of your favorite memories or people, and some uplifting quotes.



Visualisation exercise

Relaxing 'safe place' imagery

Take a couple of minutes to focus on your breathing, close your eyes, become aware of any tension in your body, and let that tension go with each out-breath.

- Imagine a place where you can feel calm, peaceful and safe.
- It may be a place you've been to before, somewhere you've dreamed about going to, somewhere you've seen a picture of, or just a peaceful place you can create in your mind's eye.
- Look around you in that place, notice the colours and shapes. What else do you notice?
- Now notice the sounds that are around you, or perhaps the silence. Sounds far away and those nearer to you. Those that are more noticeable, and those that are more subtle.
- Think about any smells you notice there.
- Then focus on any skin sensations - the earth beneath you or whatever is supporting you in that place, the temperature, any movement of air, anything else you can touch.
- Notice the pleasant physical sensations in your body whilst you enjoy this safe place.
- Now whilst you're in your peaceful and safe place, you might choose to give it a name, whether one word or a phrase that you can use to bring that image back, anytime you need to.
- You can choose to linger there a while, just enjoying the peacefulness and serenity. You can leave whenever you want to, just by opening your eyes and being aware of where you are now and bringing yourself back to alertness in the 'here and now'.



The TIPP technique

TIPP is an acronym representing Temperature, Intense Exercise, Paced Breathing, and Paired Muscle Relaxation. It is a technique used in Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT), a therapeutic approach designed to help individuals manage overwhelming emotions, reduce self-destructive behaviours, and improve interpersonal relationships.

TEMPERATURE

Change your body temperature. Splash your face with cold water, hold an ice cube, let car AC blow on your face, take a cold shower.

INTENSE EXERCISE

Do intense exercise to match your intense emotions. Sprint to the end of the street, do jumping jacks, pushups, intense dancing.

PACED BREATHING

Try Box Breathing: Breath in for 4 seconds, hold it for 4 seconds, breath out for 4. Start again and continue until you feel calmer.

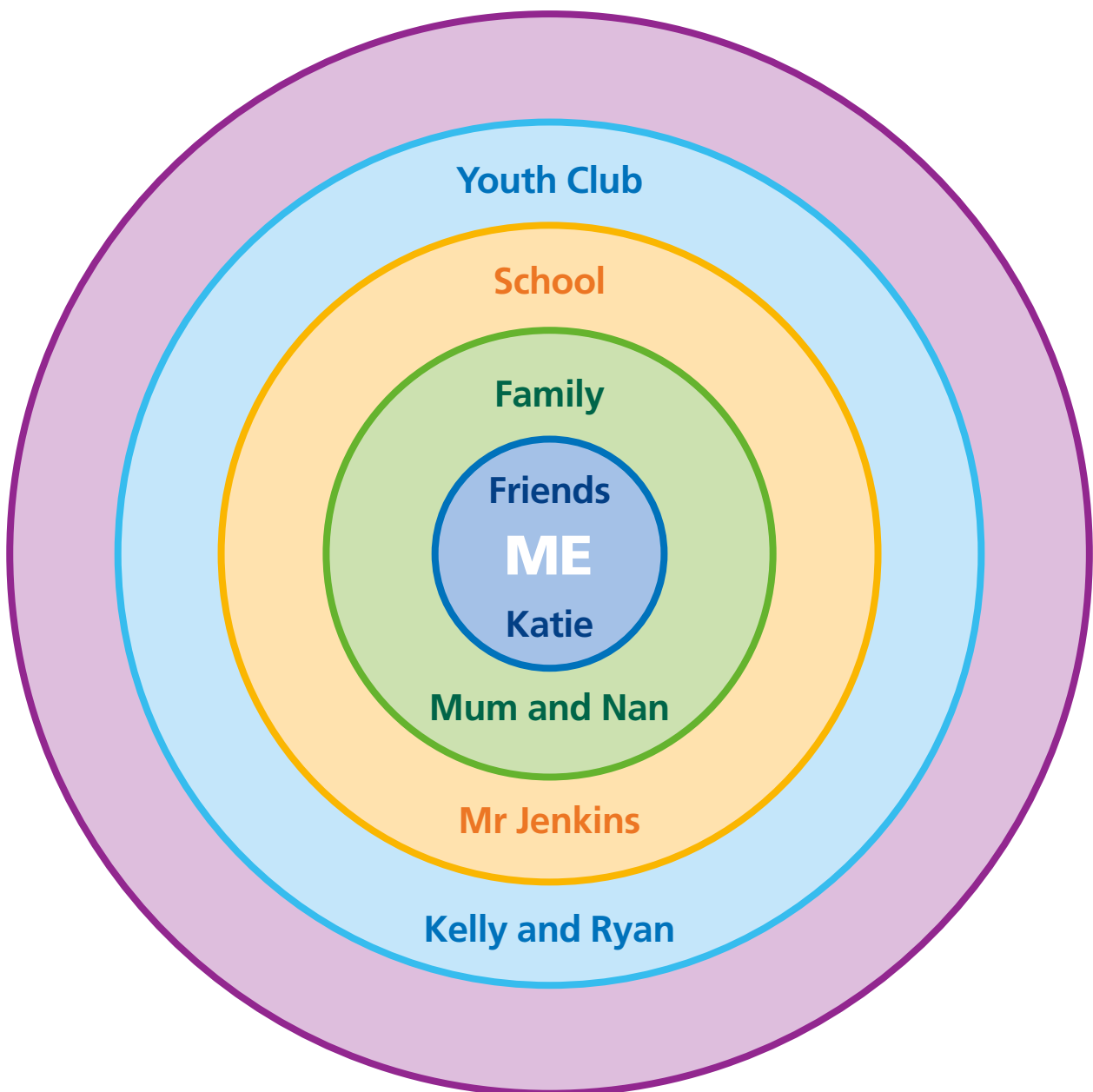
PAIRED MUSCLE RELAXATION

Focus on 1 muscle group at a time. Tighten your muscles as much as possible for 5 seconds. Then release and relax. Repeat with other muscle groups.

Importance of a social network

We know that having lots of support around us helps to keep us well and makes it easier to manage any difficult hurdles in the future. The circle diagram below symbolises your life with you in the centre. You can use the circles to map the important people in your life with the closest being place at the centre and the least close in the outer circles. You could put whoever you want on this map including extended family, school, friends and even a sports club.

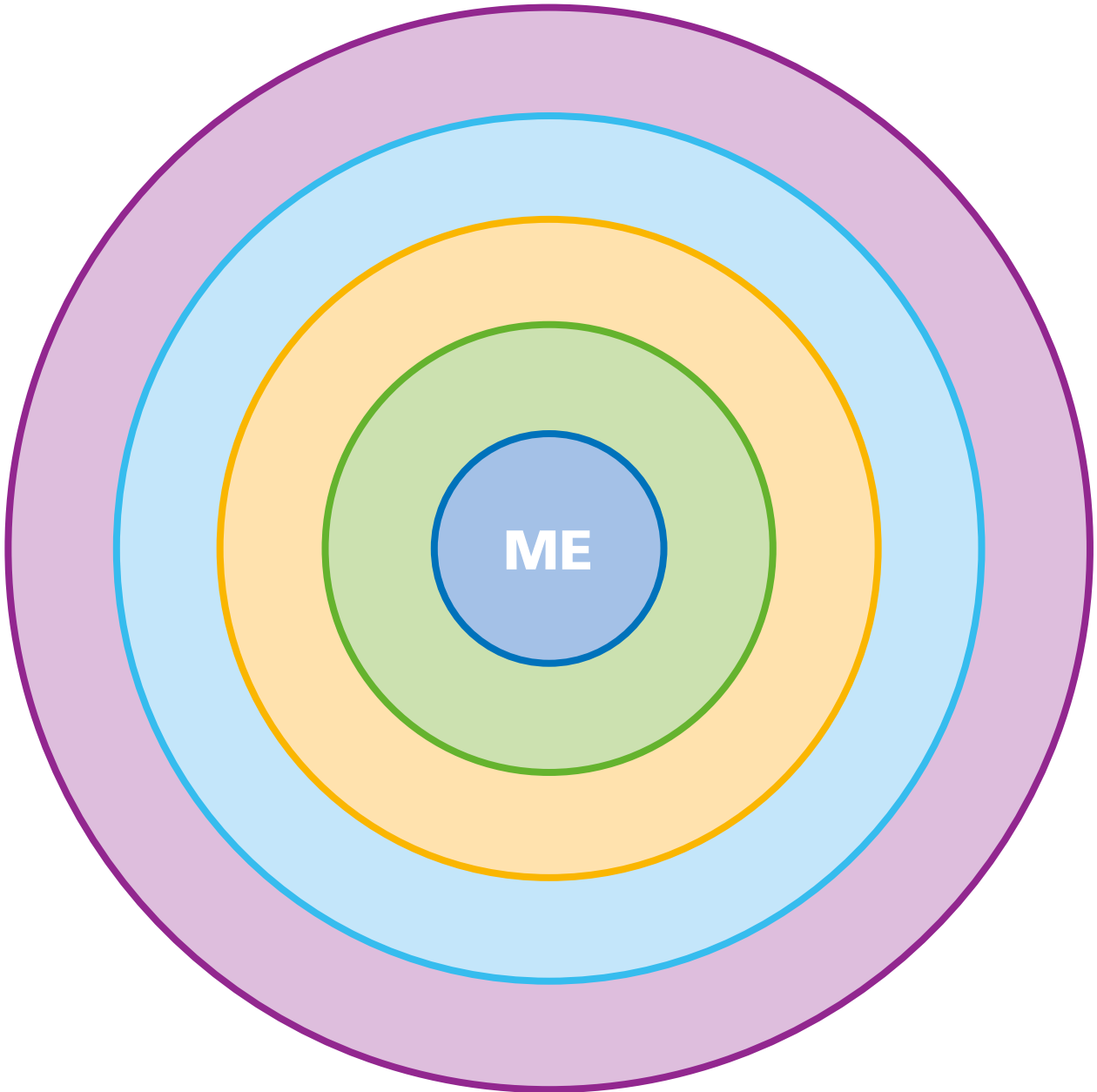
Look at the example below.





Exercise seven: Mapping my social network

Now create your own circle diagram identifying the people in your life that could offer you support.





Exercise eight: Physically managing self-harm urges

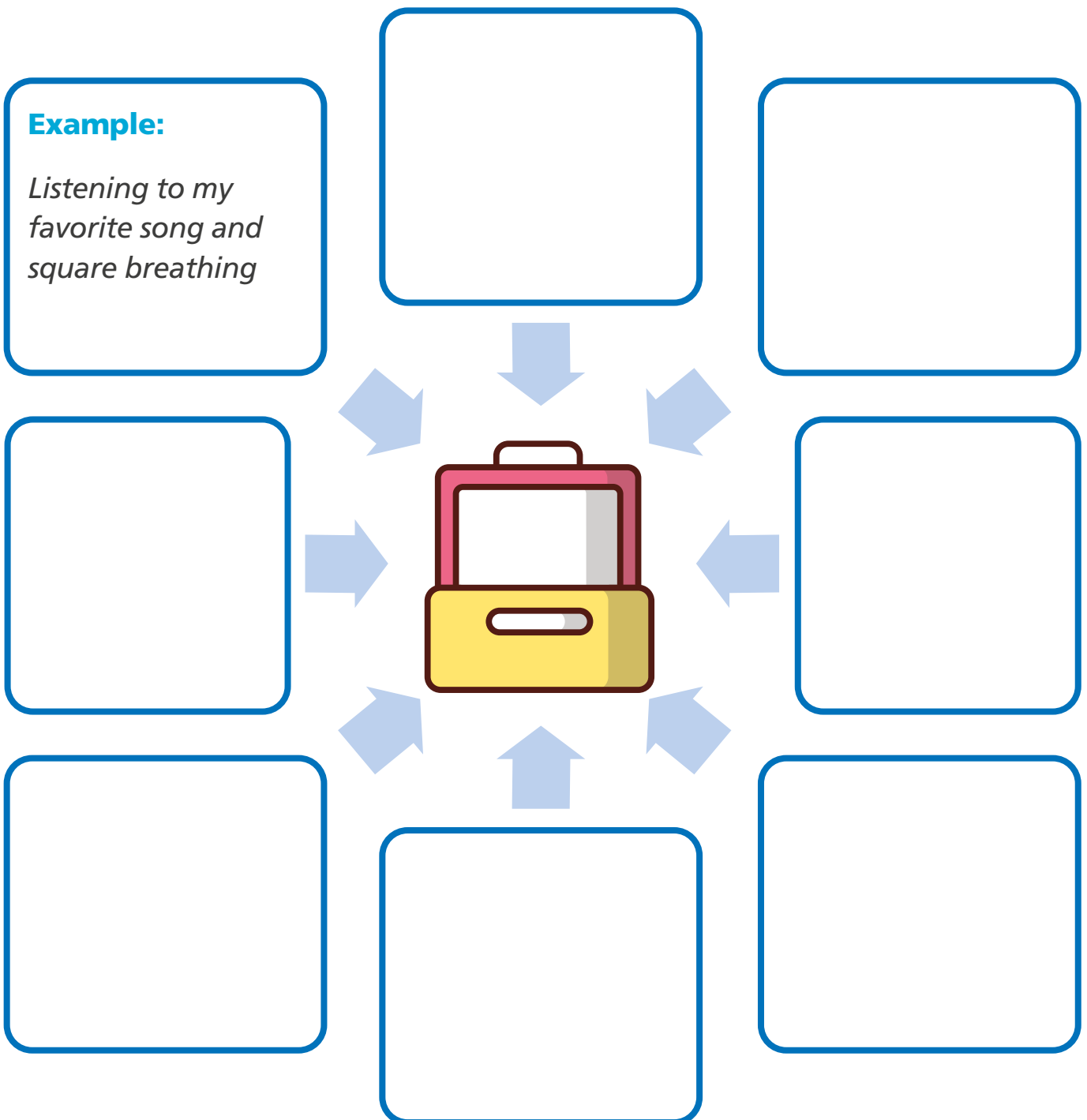
Coping strategies	Helpful	Not much use	Useless	Harmful
Using a red pen to mark where you might usually cut				
Hitting a punch bag or cushion to vent anger and frustration				
Screaming into a pillow				
Rubbing ice across your skin or holding an ice cube				
Do some exercise				
Speak to a friend				
Postpone the action for 5, 10, 15 mins				
Listen to music (that will improve your mood)				
Walk the dog/spend time with a pet				
Write letters about what you would like to say to people (you don't have to send them)				
Talk to a family member				
Sing				
Draw, paint, sculpt, do something creative				
Meditate or practice mindfulness				
Read				
Flicking an elastic band on wrists, arms, legs				
Writing negative feelings on a piece of paper then ripping it up				
Keep a diary or journal				
Cook something				
Cry				
Play an instrument				
Reality checklist – where am I, what am I doing?				



Exercise nine: Creating an emotional tool kit

An emotional toolkit is a range of techniques and tools you can use when you have the urge to self-harm. Sometimes strong emotions feel overwhelming and difficult to deal with. Preparing your emotional toolkit for when such times arise can help you to process difficult emotions. For example, looking through a photo album of happy memories, going for a walk, listening to your favorite song or reading positive affirmations you have previously written, can trigger happier thoughts, reducing your negative emotions.

From the different techniques in this chapter, draw or write what you would add into your emotional tool kit below:



Chapter five: My keeping well and safety plan



Exercise ten: My keeping well and safety plan

1. What have I found most helpful?

2. What changes have I noticed?

3. How can I maintain these changes? What skills are going to help me?

4. What things could get in the way? How can I overcome these challenges?

5. What could lead to a setback?

6. What are my early warning signs? What do I notice before I start to self-harm? (Thoughts/ feelings/behaviours/physical sensations)

7. What can I do if things become difficult? What helps, what doesn't help. Who can I contact?

8. What could others do to help me? (At home at school/college)

9. What things could get in the way? How can I overcome these challenges?

10. Who can I contact in an emergency?

Support available in Leeds

Below is a list of support services that children and young people can access in Leeds for more information and advice to help with your emotional wellbeing go to www.mindmate.org.uk

Daytime support

Leeds CYPMHS (Children and Young People's Mental Health Services)

Crisis Call Line is a mental health helpline for young people aged under 18 in Leeds who are already known to Leeds CYPMHS and also those who haven't already been referred or used the service.

Open every day from 8:00am to 8:00pm.

Call freephone **0800 953 0505**

Kooth - free online counselling for 10-18 year olds.
www.kooth.com

Mindmate Single Point of Access

Emotional wellbeing and mental health support for children and young people. Self-referral: young people 13-17 and parents/carers of 5-17 year olds.

Phone **0300 555 0324**

Time for Young People

Emotional wellbeing service for 11-18 year olds living or studying in Leeds. Offers face to face wellbeing support at different bases around Leeds. See website for location and times of drop ins:

www.childrensociety.org.uk/information/young-people/well-being/services/time-leeds



Evening support

West Yorkshire and Barnsley Night OWLS

A confidential support line for children, young people, their parents and

carers who live in Bradford, Leeds, Calderdale, Kirklees, Wakefield and Barnsley.

Open every day from 8:00pm to 8:00am.

Call freephone **0800 148 8244**

Text **07984 376950**

Teen Connect

Phone/text support for 11-18 year olds. Open everyday 3:30 – 8:00pm

Phone **0808 800 1212**

Text **07984 436 680**

Safe Zone

Crisis support for 11-17 year olds.

Monday, Thursday, Sunday 6:00 - 9:00pm.

Phone **0113 819 8189**



Treating different self-harm injuries

Sometimes self-harming can lead to your body going into shock. Your body may be in shock if you experience weakness, dizziness, feeling cold and faster/shallower breathing.

Any sign of shock requires medical attention as soon as possible.

Overdose/self-poisoning

- There is no safe way to self-poison, whether this be with medication, chemicals or fluids.
- What is an overdose? Taking anything over the recommended daily dose OR taking the full daily recommended dose within four hours (rather than spread throughout a 24 hour period).
- ALL overdoses taken within 48 hours require immediate medical attention at A&E.
- Any overdose taken within a 7 day period, where you are experiencing physical problems such as stomach ache, requires medical attention at A&E.
- If an overdose has been taken over a week ago you should see your GP urgently, however, if you have any physical complaints then attend A&E.

Cutting

- Use a new/clean blade or tool each time.
- Have access to a first aid kit – this is important to control any bleeding and prevent infection.
- Keep wounds clean.
- Lots of blood loss can lead to shock.
- If you have cut a limb, raising the limb in the air will help to reduce blood flow.
- Seek medical attention:
 - If the cut is bleeding heavily and/or the cut is deep.
 - If you lose any feeling in the area.
 - If you have any signs of infection (redness, soreness, swollen, hot to touch, weeping).

Burning

- Run cold water over the burn for at least 10 minutes.
- Remove anything surrounding the burn, e.g. clothes, rings, watches or bracelets.
- If anything gets stuck in the burn, do not remove it.
- **Chemical burns:** Liquid - wash the burn under lukewarm water for at least 30 minutes. Powder – remove any of the powder before washing. **For all chemical burns you should seek medical advice.**

Treating your self-harm injuries

The aim of this first aid kit is to increase safety and reduce risk of harm if you do engage in self-harm. The purpose is not to condone or encourage you to hurt yourself, but to help you to stay safe if stopping self-harm is not immediately possible (Nice, 2011).

Recommended first aid kit



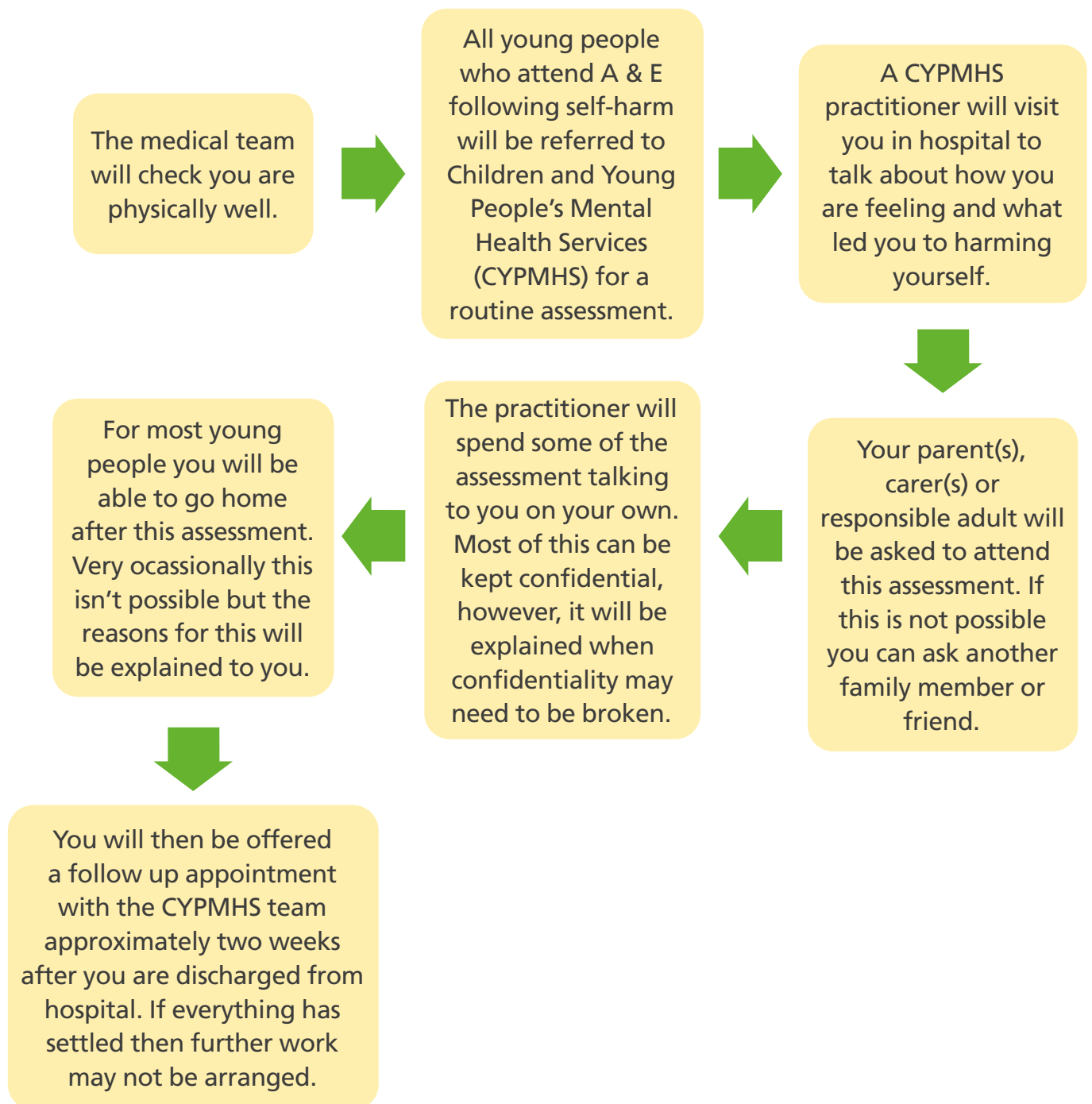
These items can be picked up for a low cost at supermarkets or pharmacies.

Attending A&E

My nearest A & E Department is:

Address:

What happens when I attend A&E?



Well done - you have now completed your workbook on self-harm!

From this workbook you will have learned how to keep yourself safe and ways to manage your thoughts.

Using the letter template below, write yourself a letter reflecting on everything you have learned and any progress you have made.

You may want to write this to yourself to pick up in those moments you have negative thoughts. Perhaps you want to congratulate yourself on how far you have come or encourage yourself to keep going.

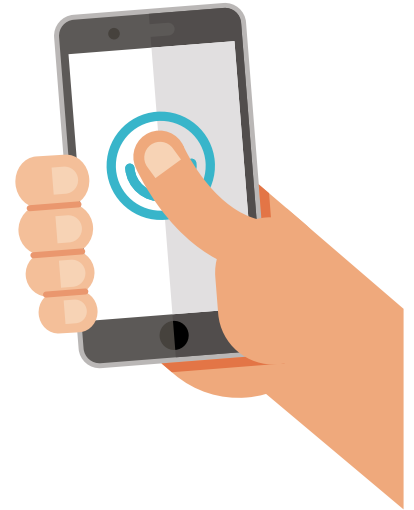
This is your letter... to you from you.



Useful information

Websites

- www.mindmate.org.uk
- www.youngminds.org.uk
- www.harmless.org.uk
- www.selfinjurysupport.org.uk
- www.mind.org.uk
- Find the Calm Harm app on www.calmharm.co.uk



Helplines

- **Leeds CYPMHS (Children and Young People's Mental Health Services)**
Crisis Call Line 0800 953 0505
Open every day of the year from 8 am to 8 pm.
- **Teen Connect**
Phone **0808 800 1212** or text **07984 436680**
Leeds based crisis line open every day of the year from 3:30pm to 8:00pm
- **Night OWLS 0800 148 8244**
West Yorkshire Children's and Young Peoples Helpline service, open from 8:00pm to 8:30 am every day.
- **Childline 0800 11 11**
Free confidential 24hr helpline for young people who are aged up to 19 years old.
- **Samaritans 08457 90 90 90**
Free confidential 24 hour helpline.
- **Young Minds 0808 802 5544**
Charity committed to improving the mental health of young people. Support for those worried about a young person's behaviour or mental health. Provides information leaflets.



Notes and questions page

