



UNDERSTANDING & RESPONDING TO SELF-HARM IN SCHOOLS



STUDENT SUPPORT STRATEGY

- Disclosure: First responses to self-harm disclosure must be emotionally calm, kind and non-judgmental.
- Use "I" statements: E.g., "I've noticed you've been a bit withdrawn/upset (insert concern here) lately."
- Be honest: Let them know school protocol around sharing information with the wellbeing team.
- Approach: Low-key, non-judgemental, validate how hard it can be to talk about and that self-harm serves a purpose.
- Seek to understand: They need to believe that you genuinely want to understand their experience.
- Acknowledge: That they may not be ready to stop. For some it may be their only way of coping. Letting go can be scary and they may not be ready to seek help.
- Pastoral care: Focus on proactive strategies, increasing supports, and reducing reactive, punitive strategies.

Remember:

- Meet the student where they are at.
- Be patient and measured in concern, education & support.
- Focus on protective factors such as sleep, exercise, eating habits, and self regulation techniques.

FIGURE
1

SOARS ASSESSMENT POCKET CARD

Responding to nonsuicidal self-injury (NSSI) using SOARS assessment

Have you ever hurt yourself on purpose without intending to end your life or attempt suicide, like cutting, biting, burning, hitting?

Suicidal ideation

- I know self-injury isn't usually about suicide, but some people may think about suicide when they self-injure. Do you ever think about purposely ending your life when you self-injure?

Onset, frequency, and methods

- When was the first/most recent time?
- How many times a week/month do you self-injure?
- What do you typically do or use?

Aftercare

- How do you take care of the wounds afterward?
- Have you ever hurt yourself so badly that you needed medical attention, even if you never got it?

Reasons

- It sounds like this has been helpful for you. What does it do for you? (In what ways does it help?)

Stage of change

- Is this something you would like to stop?
- Have you ever considered stopping?



KEY TAKEAWAYS

SCHOOL WIDE WELLBEING

Culture of Connection

- Student can identify 1x caring adult at school
- Culture of inclusion, belonging & care

Regulation & Environment

- Teach skills to regulate emotion
- Promote strategies to interrupt negative thinking (Social Emotional Learning program)
- Offer quiet spaces to decompress from sensory or emotional overwhelm
- Address sources of stress in external environment (ie. educational needs met, peer connections enhanced)

Social Media

- Educate on role media plays in influencing behaviour
- Teach critical thinking and give tools on how to deal with & talk about 'unhealthy content'
- Report concerning content or bullying they see

Engage Whānau

- Involve open & honest conversations with whānau for higher risk students
- Provide parents with resources – helping parents react with a calm, empathic and comforting demeanor can help the recovery process

Safety Planning

- Create a safety plan with student
- Ensure coping strategies serve the same purpose as self harm e.g. reduce emotional overwhelm, provide connection, communicate distress
- 'No method' talk to help prevent contagion.
- Focus on coping with mental health challenges and where to get support
- Clear procedures in place for noticing, sharing and documenting wellbeing concerns and referral processes.

Supervision

- Engage in peer consultation for risk decisions.
- Avoid wanting to fix problem or expecting progress in each session. You are not responsible for curing the student nor responsible if the behaviour repeats