

Self-Harm - Agree Disagree

KS3

10 mins

An activity to get people thinking about attitudes towards self-harm

What you need:

- **AGREE/DISAGREE** labels and blutak.
- Space for students to move around the classroom and place themselves along an imaginary line stretching from one end of the class to the other.

Method:

- Place **AGREE** and **DISAGREE** labels on the wall at either end of the classroom.
- Explain that students are going to have a chance to think about where they stand on issues relating to self-harm. There are no rights or wrongs - it is more important to explore attitudes and beliefs around the statements
- Read out each statement in turn and ask students to place themselves along an imaginary line between Agree and Disagree, showing the degree to which they agree with the statement.
- Ask why people have chosen to stand where they are.
- Refer to information below after each statement has been discussed.

Statements:

- **Self-harming can be addictive.**

Answer: Self-harm is a response to other problems issues or stresses in a person's life. But it can become a habit, a 'learned' response to those stressors which becomes a problem itself.

- **People feel afraid of doing or saying the wrong thing when it comes to self-harm.**

Answer: Research* show that people are more afraid of self-harm than other mental health issues - young people, teachers and health care professionals. Two out of three teachers, parents and young people think that they would say the wrong thing if someone turned to them for support. There is a need to increase knowledge among all groups and this will promote more consistency and empathy in the responses given to those who are self-harming. We all need to talk more openly to combat narrow views that exacerbate stigma.

- **Fear and stigma (prejudice) around self-harm make it difficult for people to get support.**

Answer: Research* shows that while people often sympathise they find it difficult to empathise with those who are self-harming. Also safeguarding procedures can make it difficult for young people to get the help they want as teachers can't hold the information and must follow procedures. (TESS is a confidential service.)

- **Online forums for people that are self-harming are dangerous.**

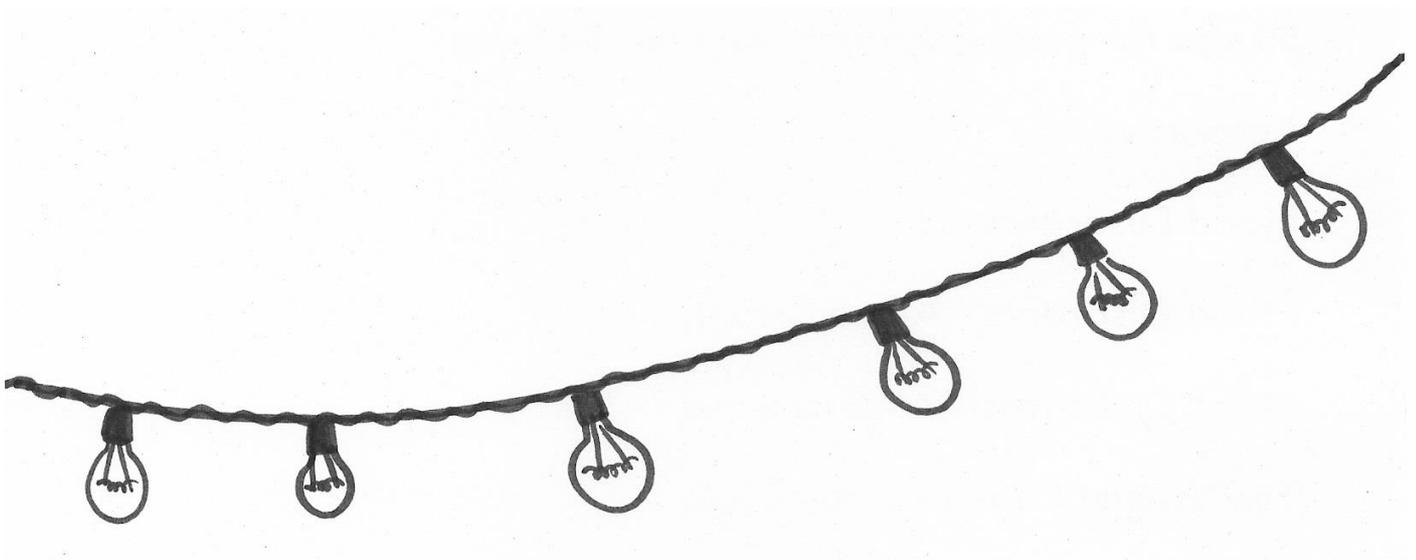
Answer: There are lots of forums out there. Some should be avoided as they are triggering, unhelpful and at worst dangerous. However there are also a number of moderated forums that offer support and understanding and this can be very helpful for young people in this situation as they find many people while sympathetic don't really understand why people self-harm. It may therefore be considered better to give a balanced view to young people, identifying trusted forums and suggesting ways they can avoid those that are potentially damaging.

*Useful Research: Talking Taboos – talking self-harm

http://www.youngminds.org.uk/about/our_campaigns/cello_self-harm

TESS: Confidential text/email service for girls and young women

<http://www.selfinjurysupport.org.uk/tess-text-and-email-support-service>



Agree

Disagree

