

## Lesson 2

# Dealing with difficult feelings

### Resources

**Short film:**  
**Millie's story**

Available from the DVD

**PowerPoint presentation:**  
**Dealing with difficult feelings**

Available from the DVD to support content delivery

**Leaflets:**

**Available from the National Self-harm Network, [www.nshn.co.uk](http://www.nshn.co.uk)**

Download and print. Consider making this information easily accessible to all pupils, inside and outside of the classroom

**PDF:**

**Digital copy of Lesson 2 teaching notes**

Available from the DVD for print and sharing purposes

### Teaching point 1:

#### Pupil learning intentions (1 minute)

- I recognise and understand different feelings
- I understand that the feelings we find difficult to deal with are the painful ones
- I understand that the feelings we find difficult to deal with are the ones most likely to lead to self-harm

### Teaching point 2:

#### Keep Safe (1 minute)

Set the ground rules for the discussion to create a safe and open environment.

Suggested script:

Over the next couple of weeks we will be discussing the topic of self-harm. This can be a very sensitive issue for some people. During these lessons you are expected to be supportive and respectful of others.

If the content of these lessons gives rise to any concerns, anxieties or worries you should feel free to approach a teacher, school nurse or any member of staff you feel comfortable talking to if you need help or advice.

In the final lesson we will be looking at organisations that can offer treatment and advice in this area. However, information will be made available after each lesson for you if you feel you wish to talk to someone in private. You will also be able to find this information online and in the library.

## Teaching point 3:

### Quick recap (1 minute)

Before beginning the first activity, ask pupils to recall what they remember from Lesson 1

This exercise will allow you to assess if the learning intentions from the previous lesson have been achieved. Use the following prompts if necessary:

- What is the definition of self-harm?
- What different types of behaviour are associated with self-harm?
- What types of life events can lead to self-harm?

### Teaching notes:

#### Feelings and emotions

Read prior to commencing Activity 1 with pupils

Lesson 2 explores the concept that some feelings are easy to deal with while others are more difficult.

It is important for pupils to understand that there are no good or bad feelings. Some feelings may be more common and easier to understand than others and are therefore easier to deal with.

Unexpected or unfamiliar feelings can be more difficult to understand and deal with. It is these feelings, which if left unchecked, can result in unsafe or risky behaviour.

Activity 1 uses scenario based examples to help pupils understand more clearly what is meant by the term 'feeling' and to illustrate the difference between easy and difficult feelings.

## Activity 1:

### 'How would you feel if...'

#### scenarios

(5 minutes)

The aim of this activity is to get pupils to connect with their feelings.

Use a relevant example as an alternative if possible.

Ask pupils to imagine: "How would you feel if your teacher handed back a piece of work and you had scored 20/20?"

Answers are likely to be: proud, happy, pleased, delighted and similar feelings.

Discuss the fact that a pupil would normally rush home and tell their parents/carers or their friends. Even if they did not tell anyone they would secretly have a good feeling inside. **These feelings are easy to deal with.**

Next ask the class to imagine: "How would you feel if your teacher handed back a piece of work and you had scored 1/20?"

Answers are likely to be: embarrassed, ashamed, annoyed at themselves, angry, hurt or similar.

Explore what they might do with those feelings. It is likely they wouldn't tell anyone. They would probably try to hide the result from their friends and parents/carers. Any time the pupil thought about the incident it would bring those feelings back and the feelings are drawn inwards. **These feelings are difficult to deal with.**

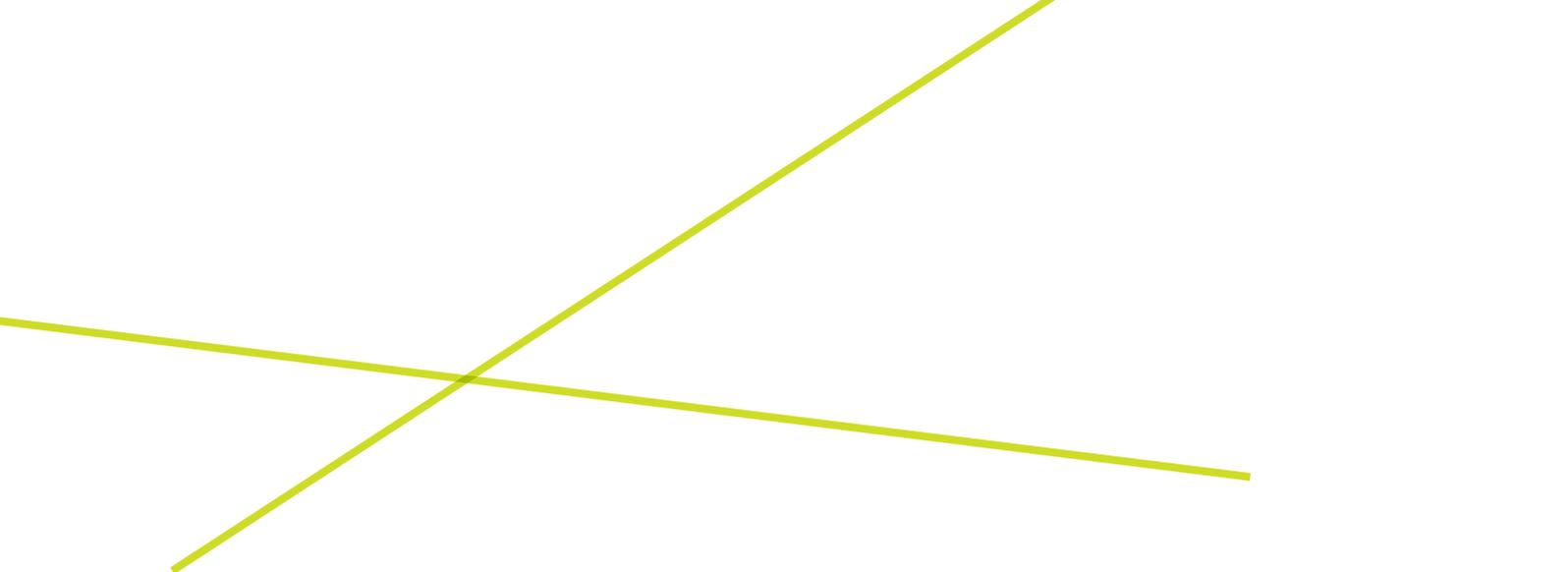
## Teaching notes:

### Dealing with difficult feelings

Read prior to commencing Activity 2 with pupils

To maintain pupil trust it is essential to stress there are no good or bad feelings only ones which are easy or difficult to deal with. What makes a feeling difficult to deal with, and ultimately unsafe is:

1. Being unable to control it;
2. Controlling it to such an extent it becomes contained or suppressed; or
3. We think we shouldn't feel that way, which can lead to other feelings such as guilt and despair.



## Activity 2:

### **'Deal with it' discussion**

#### **(10 minutes)**

Using a smart board, chalk board or flipchart, write two headings, 'Feelings that are hard to deal with' and the other 'Feelings that are easy to deal with'. Ask the class to begin to identify these feelings and write them down in the appropriate columns.

Once you have a list of five or six feelings under both headings, choose one from each and ask the class to give examples of when they might feel like that.

Continue to add to the list. You can expect pupils to put so-called 'negative' feelings such as anger, sadness and frustration into the 'hard to deal with' column. Highlight to pupils that these are generally uncomfortable, painful feelings - usually a response to difficult things that are happening in our lives. Link back to the 'life events' explored in Lesson 1.

Explain that the feelings listed in the 'easy to deal with' column tends to be considered as 'positive feelings' that can be associated with good things happening to us. Again, ask the pupils to think of life events that could trigger these easier to deal with feelings.

At this point it is important to clarify that it is not the feeling that is bad or good, but the situation that caused the feeling. All feelings are okay providing we understand them and can control them.

To continue challenging the perception that difficult feelings are bad or negative, you can ask the following questions:

- Is it bad to feel sad that our pet has died or our best friend is going to move away?
- Is it bad to feel angry that we have been grounded for a week or failed an important exam?
- Is it bad to feel frustrated that we can't find our favourite top or we can't do our homework because it's too difficult?

Feelings are natural reactions or responses to events or situations that have happened to us or around us.

Finally, ask the class: *"If feeling angry or sad or frustrated are not negative or bad feelings, when might they become a problem and lead to self-harm?"*

The answer is:

- when we are overwhelmed by them or they get out of control
- when we have no way of expressing them
- when we think they might not be an appropriate reaction to what has happened
- when we have no one to talk to about them

## Activity 3:

### Watch Millie's story

(30 minutes)

This 20 minute film looks at the impact various life events has had on a fictional character's mental health and wellbeing. The film implies a young girl called Millie is self-harming but the focus is more on the cause than the action she takes.

Before playing the DVD ask or display the following questions (shown here with answers) for pupils to think about during the film. After the film has finished spend 10 minutes discussing the answers as a group.

**Q What was happening to Millie?**

A Her parents relationship is breaking down, exam stress, friend is excluding her from things, cyber bullying.

**Q What/how was she feeling?**

A Worried, anxious, tired, fed up, stressed, low mood.

**Q What were the physical things happening to Millie?**

A She was always tired/cold, was losing weight, wearing long sleeved tops, not participating in PE.

**Q When did Millie try to tell someone? Missed opportunities?**

A She tried to speak to her mum at breakfast, tried to speak to her guidance teacher, tried to speak to her friend, her brother was concerned about her.

Explain that the DVD is in two parts and that pupils will watch 'Dean's Story' in Lesson 3. Dean also self harms but in a different way to Millie.

Before dismissing the class remind pupils of the Keep Safe rules.