

MINDMATTERS SPOTLIGHTS

SELF-HARM

Making it happen: tips and activities
for addressing this topic



Self-harm

Introduction

The 'Making it Happen Guide' for the MindMatters Spotlight: Self-harm is designed to assist you to prepare and deliver group professional learning using the MindMatters Spotlights, which can be found at www.mindmatters.edu.au. It consists of a possible sequence of professional learning activities to use with the school leadership team and a group of staff as you move through the Spotlight.

Self-harm is an important but sensitive topic. Ensuring that you are well prepared with these activities can support staff to embrace a challenging topic with confidence and safety.

MindMatters Spotlights can be used in flexible ways: as an individual, in small groups, as a faculty, as a whole staff, or as an action team. MindMatters Spotlights are not intended to be used with students and/or their families.

As each school context is unique, it is important to carefully plan the best approach to meet staff learning needs. Trained healthcare professionals and the school action team who have an understanding of mental health and the direction that the school wishes to take can be well placed to facilitate group learning on the MindMatters Spotlight topics.

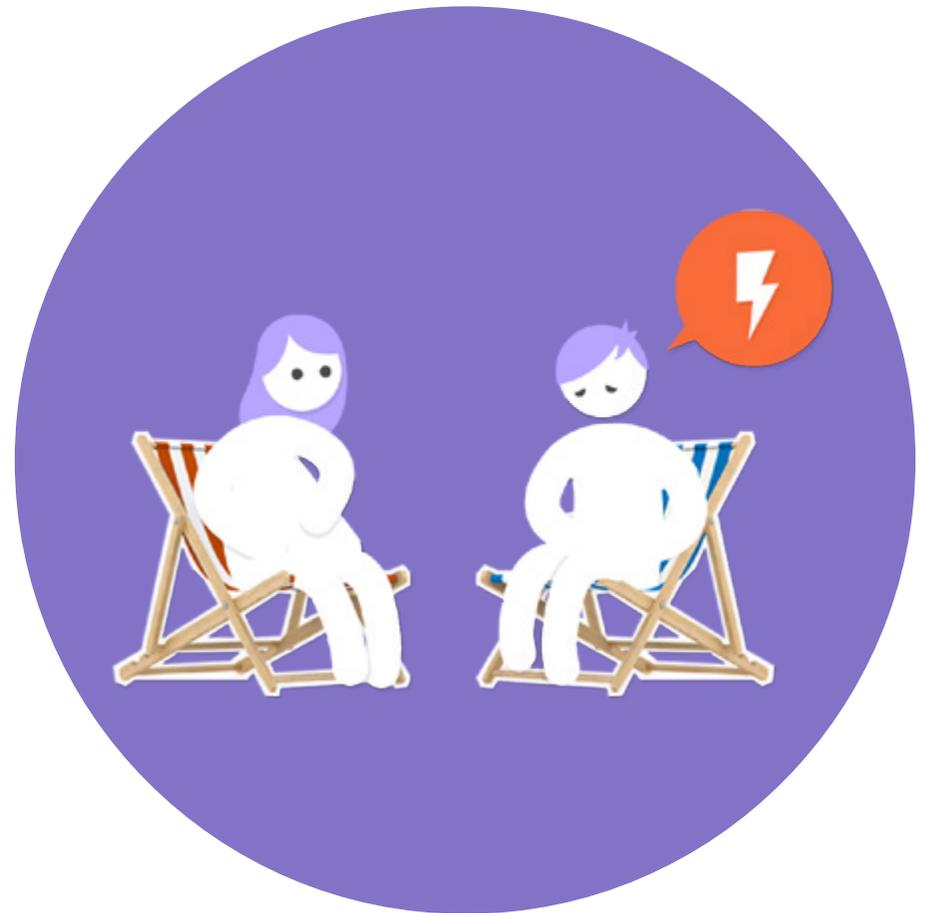
Taking the time to consider and plan for the particular sensitivities that may arise from using the MindMatters Spotlights is an essential step for school leaders. It is important to be prepared for people who may want to seek support after sensitive discussions.

For more information and ideas, use this guide in conjunction with the [How to Facilitate MindMatters Modules Facilitator Guide](#) and the key resources linked to this document. Principals Australia Institute Project Officers can also provide you with further advice and support.

Prepare

Before you begin facilitating a group session, you might like to undertake the following steps:

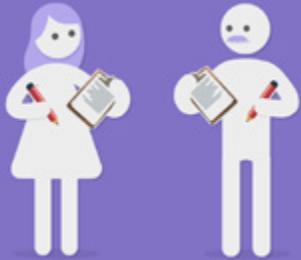
1. View and undertake the Spotlight(s) yourself.
2. Familiarise yourself with any background reading and references.
3. Decide which activities you will include and how much time you will aim to spend on them.
4. Check that your school allows access to YouTube, as each Spotlight contains YouTube videos. If not, speak to your IT team to get access.
5. Select a physical environment conducive to active learning (people sitting in discussion groups, room to move, access to water and refreshment).
6. Decide whether each person will access the Spotlight or whether the group will use large screen projection.
7. Organise copies of any pre-reading and any materials needed for activities.
8. Enlist support of the school leadership team and MindMatters action team members (if relevant).
9. Plan for particular discussion sensitivities. This guide provides information on some sensitivities to be mindful of, however it is useful to consult with relevant staff at your school and consider your school's context.
10. Enlist the support of a relevant healthcare professional to co-facilitate, lead the discussions, or provide you with support in delivering the MindMatters Spotlight.



Overview

Activity - For school leaders	Time	Materials needed
1. Preparing for using the MindMatters Spotlight: Self-harm and having suicide prevention-focused conversations with staff	30 minutes	Conversations Matter fact sheets - Factsheet: Group discussions about suicide prevention, Core principles: prevention-focused conversations, Factsheet: Supporting CALD communities to talk about suicide, MindMatters Spotlight: Self-harm, online device.
2. Reflective questions for school leadership and action teams – policy and processes	30 minutes	Guiding questions, MindMatters Spotlight: Self-harm, online device, relevant school policies and procedures, MindMatters Spotlight: Self-harm - Responding to incidents of self-harm flowchart (suggested resource in absence of pre-existing school equivalent).
Activity - For staff	Time	Materials needed
1. Develop (or revisit) agreements for working together	5 minutes	Whiteboard or poster paper, markers.
2. View the animation – MindMatters Spotlight: Self-harm	10 minutes	MindMatters Spotlight: Self-harm animation, online device.
3. Developing shared understandings	20 minutes	MindMatters Spotlight: Self-harm panel video, online device, hard copies of headspace Fact Sheet: Sorting fact from fiction, sticky notes, whiteboard or poster paper, markers.
4. Deepening understandings about self-harm	20 minutes	Online device, preselected video (see activity for sample video ideas).
5. Our school's approach to addressing self-harm (understanding my role and who is there to help)	20 minutes	Relevant school policies and procedures, MindMatters Spotlight: Self-harm - Responding to incidents of self-harm flowchart (suggested resource in absence of pre-existing school equivalent), online devices or whiteboard or poster paper, markers.
6. Supports for staff and tips for self-care	10 minutes	Space for people to move around. Details of supports available to staff e.g. Employee Assistance Programs.

ACTIVITY - FOR SCHOOL LEADERS



🕒 TIME: 30 minutes

📁 MATERIALS:

- Conversations Matter fact sheets - [Factsheet: Group discussions about suicide prevention](#), [Core principles: prevention-focused conversations](#), [Factsheet: Supporting CALD communities to talk about suicide](#)
- [MindMatters Spotlight: Suicide prevention](#)
- Online device

❓ **PURPOSE:** To consider evidence-based core principles for having prevention-focused conversations when planning the use of the 'MindMatters Spotlight: Self-harm' with school staff.

1. Preparing for using the MindMatters Spotlight: Self-harm and having prevention focused conversations

Instructions:

1. Read the Conversations Matter fact sheets:
 - [Factsheet: Group discussions about suicide prevention](#)
 - [Core principles: prevention-focused conversations](#)
 - [Factsheet: Supporting CALD communities to talk about suicide](#)
2. Familiarise yourself with the different elements of the [MindMatters Spotlight: Self-harm](#) – animation, information, downloadable resources, panel video, further resources and links.
3. Discuss what appropriate facilitation of the MindMatters Spotlight information might look like for your school staff. Work through the Conversations Matter 'things to remember' for group conversations and core principles.
4. Document your plan of action.
NOTE: To support schools to prepare for using the [MindMatters Spotlight: Self-harm](#) we recommend drawing from the evidence-based Conversations Matter resources developed by the Hunter Institute of Mental Health. Although these resources focus on suicide prevention conversations, the core principles and considerations are relevant when planning conversations relating to self-harm. We acknowledge that self-harm and suicide are not always linked and have unique differences.

Debrief: Planning for important conversations assists schools to create safe learning environments for staff.

ACTIVITY - FOR SCHOOL LEADERS



 **TIME:** 30 minutes

 **MATERIALS:**

- Guiding questions
- [MindMatters Spotlight: Self-harm](#)
- Online device

 **PURPOSE:** Seeing approaches to addressing self-harm within the broader context of MindMatters, enables leadership groups to take a comprehensive and cohesive whole school approach to reduce the likelihood of self-harm and to respond effectively to self-harm incidents.

2. Reflective questions for school leadership and action teams

Instructions:

The following reflective questions may be helpful to review and consolidate your school's approach to addressing self-harm.

1. Review the school's policies and procedures relating to staff, students and families.

Staff

- What is your school staff's current understanding of self-harm and why it occurs?
- What opportunities do staff have to learn more about this topic?
- Would school staff be confident to identify self-harming behaviour? Are staff aware of common warning signs?
- What support is provided for staff who respond to incidents of self-harm?

Students

- What supports does your school have in place to help young people to cope with their emotions and deal with stress?
- How do staff support the mental health of all young people at the school? This includes young people who self-harm and young people who witness others self-harming.
- Does the school implement a whole school social and emotional learning program to proactively build student resilience and coping skills?

Families

- How are student self-harm incidents managed with families?
- What processes does the school have in place to encourage open communication between families and the school?

▼ **ACTIVITY CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE** ▼

ACTIVITY - FOR SCHOOL LEADERS



 **TIME:** 30 minutes

 **MATERIALS:**

- Guiding questions
- [MindMatters Spotlight: Self-harm](#)
- Online device

 **PURPOSE:** Seeing approaches to addressing self-harm within the broader context of MindMatters, enables leadership groups to take a comprehensive and cohesive whole school approach to reduce the likelihood of self-harm and to respond effectively to self-harm incidents.

School

- Does your school have policies and processes in place to respond to incidents of self-harming behaviour?
- If so, is everyone in the school community aware of the school policy and procedures that address self-harm? Do staff, students and families know what to do if someone has disclosed that they are self-harming?
- Is there anything you would like to change about the way your school helps to prevent and address self-harm? If so, how would you go about making those changes?

1. Explore existing school data.

- How might student self-harm concerns be reflected in school and student data?
- What other information (anecdotal, incident reports, referrals to school counsellors) could be gathered to understand the impact and responses to self-harm in the school?

2. Consider further information and supports.

- What further information or support might you need to finalise and communicate your school's policy and procedures?
- What mechanisms are in place to ensure that all staff are familiar and confident with following these procedures?

For further information on policy review and an example policy template for managing non-suicidal self-injury in schools read: Berger, E., Hasking, P., & Reupert, A. (2014). [Knowledge and experiences of school staff towards student self-injury: Final report for schools and universities](#). Monash University, Australia.

Debrief: What action do we need to take? Who might we need to consult with and inform? How will we continue this conversation with the school staff, gain their input and build shared ownership?

ACTIVITY - FOR STAFF



 **TIME:** 5 minutes

 **MATERIALS:**

- Whiteboard or poster paper
- Markers

 **PURPOSE:** To create a safe learning environment so that all staff can contribute to the session in a respectful way. To make expectations clear to ensure all participants contribute their views and ideas. To encourage people to take responsibility for their own learning and be accountable to colleagues.

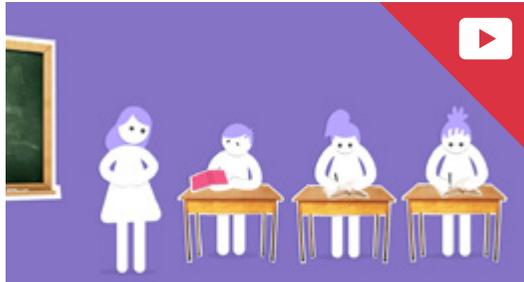
1. Develop (or revisit) agreements for working together

Instructions:

1. Explain that MindMatters Spotlights contribute to the school's ongoing whole school approach to improving the mental health of students.
2. Detail any 'housekeeping' issues.
3. Acknowledge the sensitive nature of the topic/s, provide information on the supports available to staff and develop (or revisit) group agreements to keep the conversation safe.
4. Clarify the intended learning outcomes and duration of the professional learning session.

Debrief: Say to the group 'Negotiating group agreements takes time and is an important part of a professional learning session. It helps to create safe and supportive environments, which is a key protective factor for our mental health and wellbeing. A safe learning environment also enables open, robust discussion in both staff and student settings.'

ACTIVITY - FOR STAFF



TIME: 10 minutes

MATERIALS:

- [MindMatters Spotlight: Self-harm animation](#)
- Online device

PURPOSE: To gain an overview of the challenges and approaches to addressing self-harm. To share effective strategies for responding to and reducing self-harm incidents and explore the benefits of focusing on relationships, connections and belonging. To apply ideas to individual practice.

2. View the animation – MindMatters Spotlight: Self-harm

Instructions:

1. View the [MindMatters Spotlight: Self-harm](#) animation.
2. In pairs or small groups, discuss the following questions:
 - What is most challenging for you around this topic?
 - What are your strategies for discussing concerns with a student?
 - What strategies have been useful or not so useful?
 - What is your level of experience or confidence in checking in with a student you are concerned about? What would support you?
 - What strategies would you use to share your concerns about a student with someone else?
3. Invite pairs or small groups to share their ideas with the whole group.
4. As a whole group, brainstorm and document:
 - What is the school doing well?
 - Where are there opportunities to build protective factors for students within the school environment?
 - Where could we work with students and families to build additional protective factors such as belonging, connection, coping and help seeking skills?

Debrief: Invite participants to share any insights they have had during this activity.

ACTIVITY - FOR STAFF



🕒 **TIME:** 20 minutes

📄 **MATERIALS:**

- [MindMatters Spotlight: Self-harm panel video](#)
- Online devices
- [headspace Fact Sheet: Sorting fact from fiction](#)
- Sticky notes
- Whiteboard or poster paper, markers

❓ **PURPOSE:** To have a shared understanding of self-harm and to explore common myths associated with the behaviour.

3. Developing shared understandings

Instructions:

1. Watch the [MindMatters Spotlight: Self-harm panel video](#)
2. Explain that participants will have an opportunity to share their reflections on the panel video in pairs or small groups. If time permits, ask participants to reflect on the following statements from the video:
 - 'I tend to turn it (attention seeking) around and say it's attention needing, because there is actually a need underneath'.
 - 'All school staff have an important role to play in the wellbeing of our young people'.
 - 'I think teachers need to look after themselves too, and they need to get debriefing, and EAP programs are in schools to look after staff as well, because it can be quite confronting'.
3. Provide participants with a copy of the [headspace Fact Sheet: Sorting fact from fiction](#). Ask participants to read and jot down three 'ah ha' moments or interesting facts on sticky notes, then share them in pairs.
4. Invite pairs to share their reflections with the whole group.

Debrief: Say to the group 'Self-harm is a complex and challenging topic so it is important we have shared understandings of what it is and the best evidence-based approaches to addressing it.'

ACTIVITY - FOR STAFF



🕒 **TIME:** 20 minutes

📄 **MATERIALS:**

- Online device
- Preselected video:
[Self-harm in the early years and at primary school - video](#)
- [The battle with self-harm - a personal story](#)
WARNING: THIS VIDEO CONTAINS IMAGERY THAT MAY BE DISTRESSING FOR SOME VIEWERS
- [Self-harm: parents' experiences](#)

❓ **PURPOSE:** To gain a deeper understanding of self-harm behaviours in children and young people. To provide opportunities for staff to discuss the context of their own school.

4. Deepening understandings about self-harm

Instructions:

1. State your rationale for sharing the chosen video. For example – ‘We will watch a video to deepen our understanding of self-harm for younger students as a way to help us reflect on ways our school can address this issue across the whole school’.
2. Show the video your leadership team has viewed and selected from the examples.
3. In pairs or small groups, ask participants to reflect on the following questions:
 - What is one thing that stood out for you?
 - What is one thing you are curious about or would like to know more about?
 - What is one thing we could do differently at school to address self-harm (either at an individual or whole school level)?
4. Invite participants to share their insights with the whole group and record strategy ideas.

Debrief: Say to the group ‘Self-harm is a complex behaviour that is quite common among young people. Early intervention plays an important part in young people finding healthier coping strategies. As this can be a challenging or confronting topic it is important for staff to reach out for the support they need’.

ACTIVITY - FOR STAFF



 **TIME:** 20 minutes

MATERIALS:

- Relevant school policies and procedures
- [MindMatters Spotlight: Self-harm – Responding to incidents of self-harm flowchart](#)
- Online devices or whiteboard or poster paper, markers

 **PURPOSE:** To have a shared understanding of the school's approach to addressing self-harm and the relevant school policies and procedures for staff.

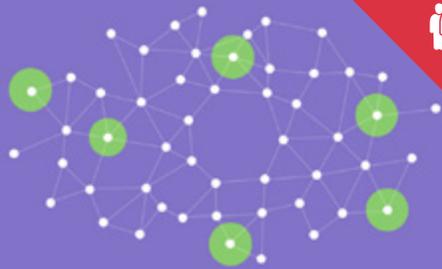
5. Our school's approach to addressing self-harm

Instructions:

1. Explain that it is important to have a shared understanding of the school's approach to addressing self-harm and the relevant school policies, procedures and supports for staff.
2. Provide groups of participants with copies of relevant school policies and procedures and the [MindMatters Spotlight: Self-harm – Responding to incidents of self-harm flowchart](#) (or relevant equivalent tool used by the school).
3. In groups, review and document:
 - What aspects of our school policies and procedures are working well?
 - What might need adding or updating?
 - What roles and responsibilities do staff members, school leadership and wellbeing staff have in addressing self-harm?
 - Where can staff seek support?

Debrief: Thank staff for their input and collect any notes from the discussions. Invite participants to share any insights they have had during this activity. Provide an overview of any actions to be taken from this activity.

ACTIVITY - FOR STAFF



🕒 **TIME:** 10 minutes

📄 **MATERIALS:**

- Space for people to move around

❓ **PURPOSE:** To provide an opportunity for staff to finish the session with a positive experience. For staff to connect with each other and share positive self-care strategies. To ensure staff are aware of the supports available to them both inside and external of the school.

6. Support for staff and tips for self-care

Instructions:

1. Explain that self-harm can be a challenging and confronting topic to talk about and address in school. Provide participants with details of the school supports for staff (e.g. processes for raising concerns, debriefing and access to Employee Assistance Programs and external services).
2. Ask everyone to walk around the room and find a partner. Invite participants to share three positive strategies they use to support their own wellbeing.

You may like to use a metaphor, such as, 'many of the gadgets we use on a daily basis require recharging – it's important to take the time each day to recharge ourselves', or use language that will best resonate with your staff such as daily mental health push-ups or things that keep you strong.

3. Ask the group to mingle again and repeat this process with a new partner.
4. Repeat this process to create as many pairings as you have time for.

Debrief: Ask the group: 'What are some of the things that you have in common with others? Did you learn any new ideas you might try? How did it feel to connect with people you work with? What is the benefit of using activities like these?'

As you close the self-harm activity session, thank staff for attending and embracing this challenging topic. Ask them to enact at least one of their self-care strategies this afternoon/evening and to seek support if issues from today's activity arise for them.

MindMatters is a national mental health initiative for secondary schools developed by *beyondblue* with funding from the Australian Government Department of Health.

See more MindMatters resources at www.mindmatters.edu.au

This information is to be used as a guide only and is not intended as a substitute to formal training or professional medical advice on mental health or suicide prevention. Staff are advised to always refer to school policies and procedures in the first instance. This information is provided by Beyond Blue Limited in good faith and on an 'as is' basis. While every care has been taken in preparing this information, Beyond Blue Limited makes no representation or warranty as to the reliability or completeness of the information contained in this document. You must make your own assessment of the information contained in this document and if you choose to rely on it, it is wholly at your own risk. To the extent permitted by law, Beyond Blue Limited will not be liable to you or anyone else for any loss or damage, however caused, which may be directly or indirectly suffered arising from the use of, or reliance upon this information.