

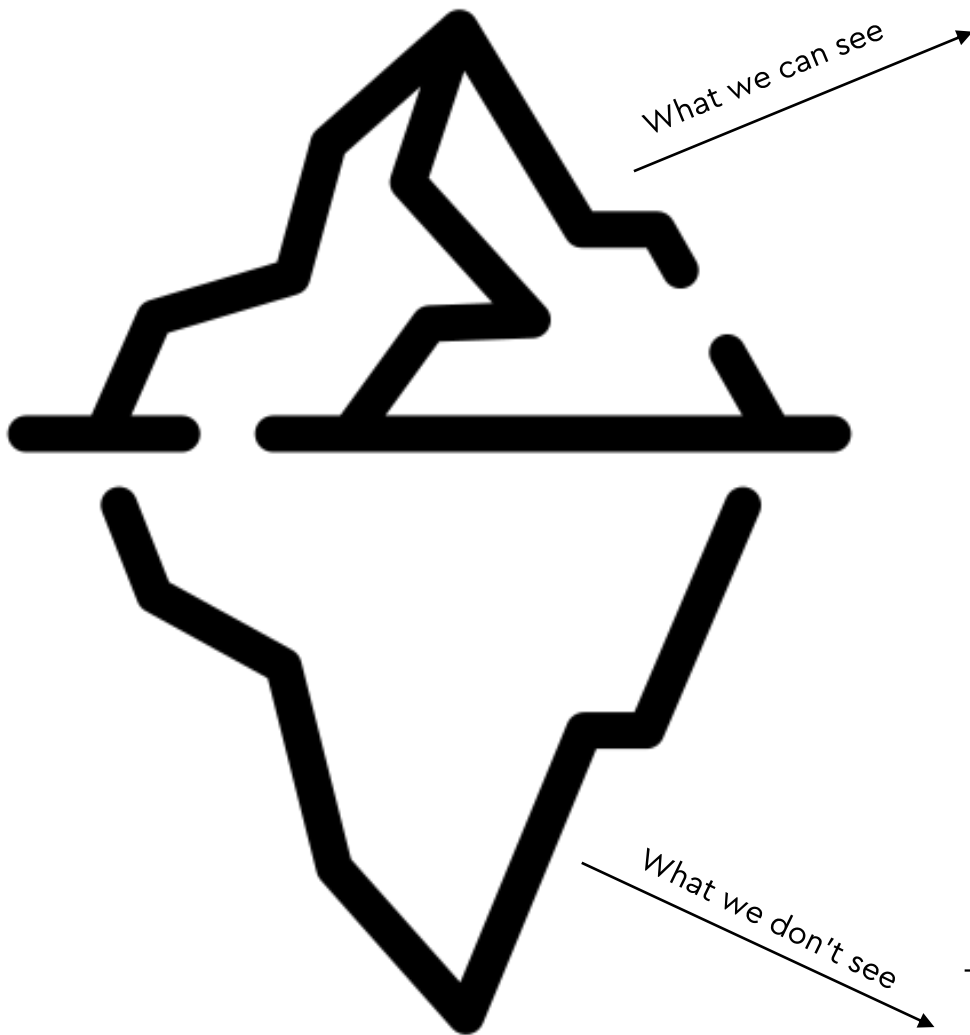
Functions of Self-Harm

Function	How does self-harm meet this need?
To make me feel real	Counteracts dissociation
To punish me	Temporally lessens guilt and shame
To stop me from feeling	When strong feelings feel too dangerous
To physically mark the body	Translation of emotional pain into physical sensation
To let something bad out, to release	Symbolically getting rid of shame
To regain control	Being in charge, controlling self-harm
To communicate or elicit care	To let someone know how bad I feel
To self-soothe or calm high emotional arousal	Self-harm makes me feel calmer
To stop the thoughts and emotions	Disrupts distressing emotional distress

Supporting someone who uses self-harm

Stopping self-harm abruptly can sometimes make things worse, and getting an individual to 'promise to stop' can escalate risk. As well as this, taking away an individual's only coping strategy can also escalate the risk into suicide. Therefore, it is important that steps towards stopping self-harm are paced individually. Initially, starting to talk about the issues a person has may make self-harm escalate at first, but recovery is possible.

It is important to understand the individual's motivation for self-harm, as well as the function it serves. We can support individuals who self-harm by understanding their emotional experience before, during and after self-harm, as well as considering the wider context, such as emotional triggers and what is happening in that individual's life. To recover from self-harm, the individual needs to develop their resilience, emotional regulation and find a healthy way to self-soothe.



Self-harming behaviour is the

symptom:

- Cutting
- Burning
- Object insertion
- Asphyxiation
- Overdosing/Poisoning
- Hitting/Bruising
- Scratching
- Hair pulling

The underlying distress and the **function** of self-harm

What coping mechanism is self-harm providing?

Many risk assessments are often based on the method of self-harm, ignoring the underlying pain