

# Understanding Non-Suicidal Self-Injury in Youth

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# Today, we will answer the following questions...

- What is Non-Suicidal Self-Injury (NSSI)?
- Why do youth engage in NSSI?
- What are the risk factors and warning signs?
- What may increase the likelihood of suicidal behavior?
- How can I help my child who engages in NSSI?





# What is Non-Suicidal Self-Injury?

- Non-Suicidal Self-Injury (NSSI) is the intentional act of harm to one's body without suicidal intent
- Youth may use NSSI as a maladaptive coping strategy in dealing with perceived stressors
- There are a variety of methods that one may use, including picking, scratching, biting, hitting, cutting, and/or burning oneself
- NSSI does not include body modification (tattoos, piercings) or risk-taking behaviors (drug use, sexually risky behaviors)

# Why do youth engage in NSSI?

## Intrapersonal

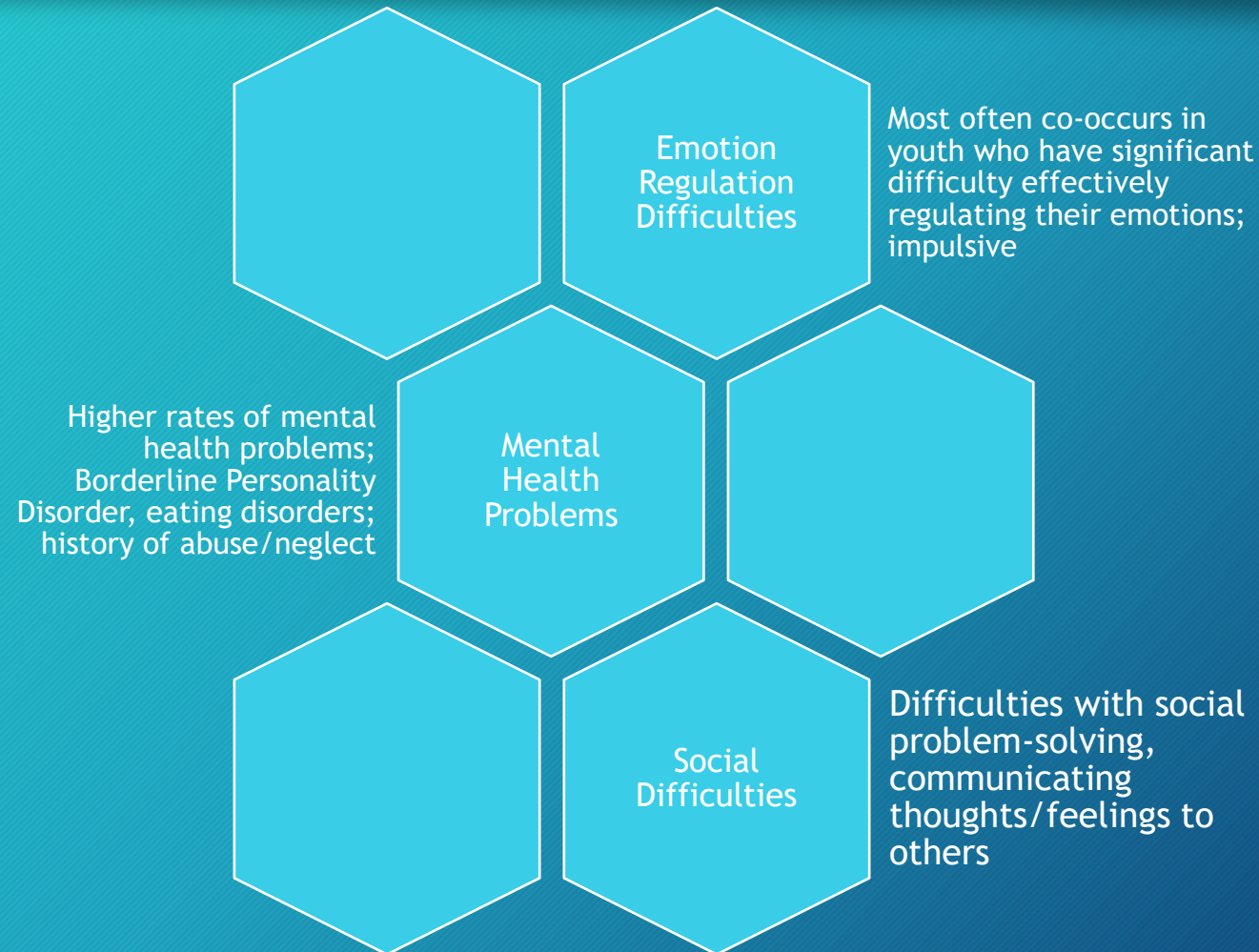
- Emotional Regulation
- Physiological Factors
- Punishing Oneself

## Interpersonal

- Communication of Distress
- Desire for Support
- Social Difficulties

Important not to minimize as attention-seeking

# What are the risk factors associated with NSSI?





# What are the warning signs?

Frequent and/or unexplained cuts, bruises, scars, burns

Consistent, inappropriate use of clothing to conceal wounds

Topics of self-harm in writings, drawing

Possession of sharp objects

Appears disconnected from surroundings

Isolates self from others

Risk-taking behaviors

What may increase the likelihood of suicidal behavior?

More Frequent NSSI

Longer Duration of Active NSSI

Increased Methods of NSSI

Desensitization to NSSI

# How can I help my child who engages in NSSI?

- Initial Response: calm, compassionate, supportive, non-judgmental
- Validation: communicating you understand one's experience; acknowledging the emotional distress he/she is experiencing
- Communication: encouraging, but not pressuring, open communication; ask questions as child allows/feels comfortable
- Resources: finding resources to assist you and your child on this journey



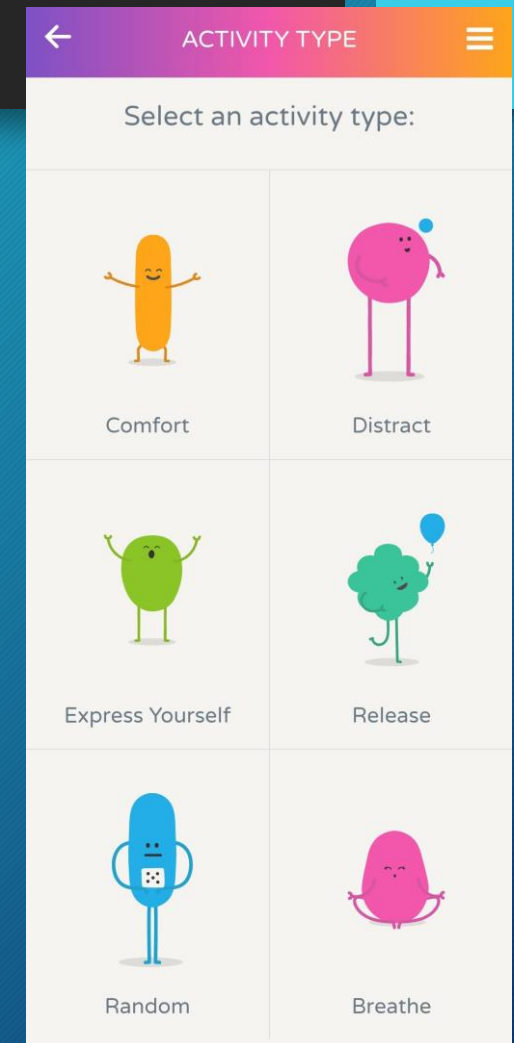
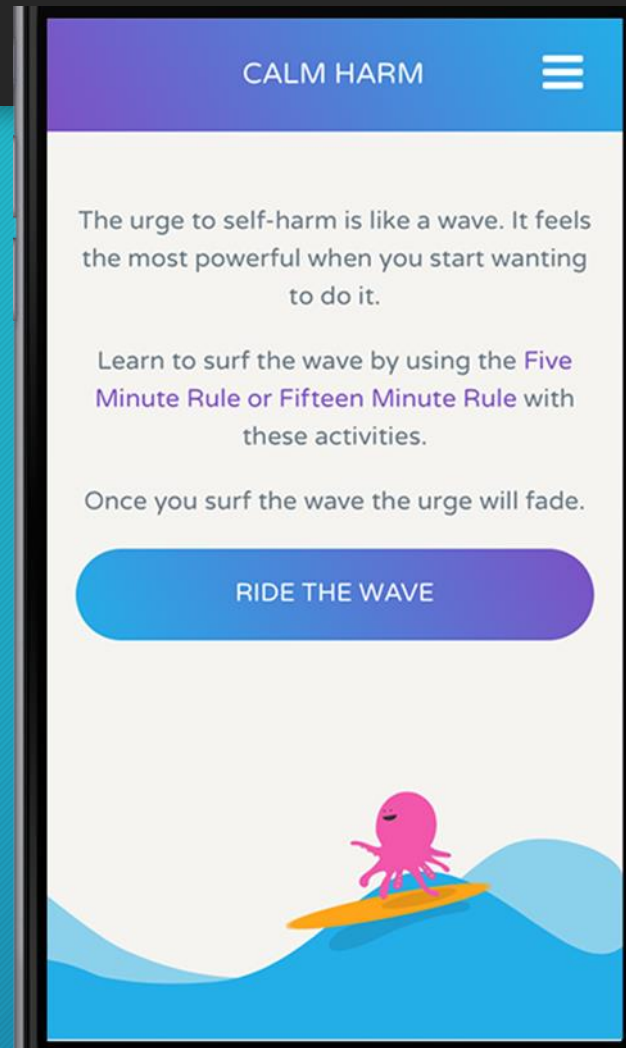
# Strategies for Coping with Stressors and Improved Emotional Regulation

- Relaxation Strategies
  - Deep breathing
  - Mindfulness, meditation
- Alternative Ways to Communicate Distress
  - Journaling, poetry, songs
  - Talking with a trusted adult
  - Creative outlets (painting, drawing, dancing, theater)
- Extracurricular Activities (clubs, sports, volunteering)
- Sensory Input (aromatherapy, stress ball, soft blanket)
- Distraction Activities (crossword, puzzles, fidgets, walking, watching a funny movie)



# Calm Harm App

Developed by a Clinical Psychologist  
Based on DBT techniques

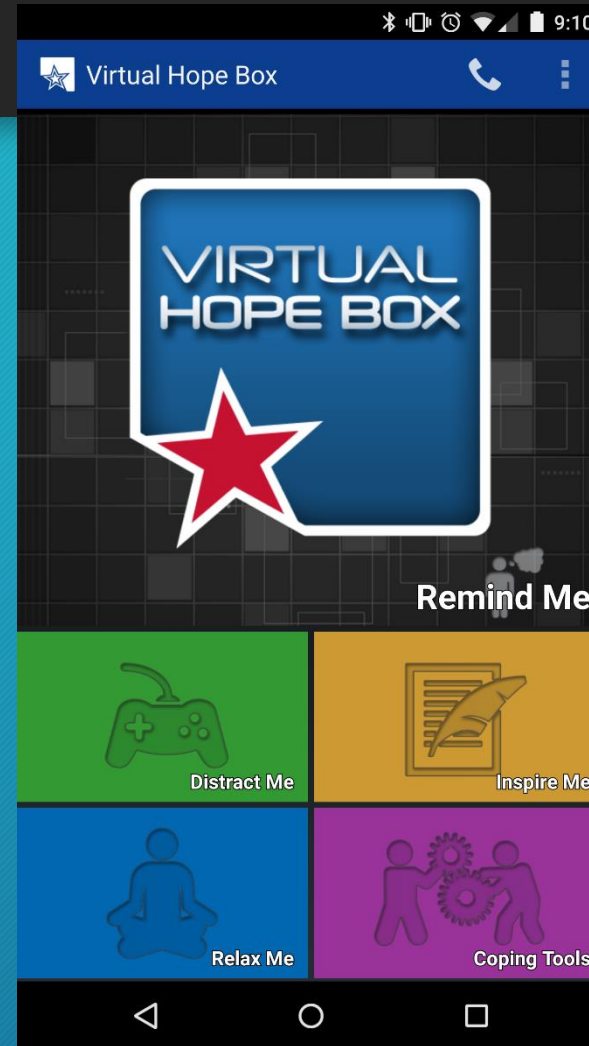




# Virtual Hope Box app

Developed by Defense Health Agency  
(DHA) Connected Health

Based on Cognitive-Behavioral  
techniques





# Parent-Focused Readings

- Self-Injury: A Guide for Parents & Families  
<http://sioutreach.org/learn-self-injury/parents-and-families/>
- Helping Teens Who Cut, Second Edition: Using DBT Skills to End Self-Injury by Michael Hollander, PhD



# Online Resources

- S.A.F.E. Alternatives [www.selfinjury.com](http://www.selfinjury.com)
  - General Information
  - 800.DONTCUT
- Self-Injury Outreach and Support (SiOS) [www.sioutreach.org](http://www.sioutreach.org)
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline  
[www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org)
  - General Info (English & Spanish)
  - 800.273.TALK
  - Online chat option
- Cornell Research on Self-Injury and Recovery  
<http://www.selfinjury.bctr.cornell.edu/>



# Questions? Contact Information

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