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AUTISM, SELF- HARM AND SUICIDAL THINKING

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Why do people self-harm
and how to talk to teenagers
and young adults about it?

Is there a connection
between self-harming and
suicide?

What to do if an autistic
teenager/young adult tells
you they want to die by
suicide.

WHAT IS SELF-HARM?

- ❖ Intentional self-poisoning or self-injury
irrespective of motivation (Hawton et al, 2003)
 - ❖ Paradoxically, damage is done to the body to
preserve the integrity of the mind (NICE, 2004)
 - ❖ A release of pressure
 - ❖ As a symptom of other difficulties
 - ❖ Self-injurious behaviour as a result of sensory
overload
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SELF-HARM AND SUICIDE

- Self-harm is a risk factor for suicide
 - Does not mean that the person will necessarily be suicidal or wants to die by suicide
 - Important to risk assess and to understand what is happening and why it is happening
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REMEMBER

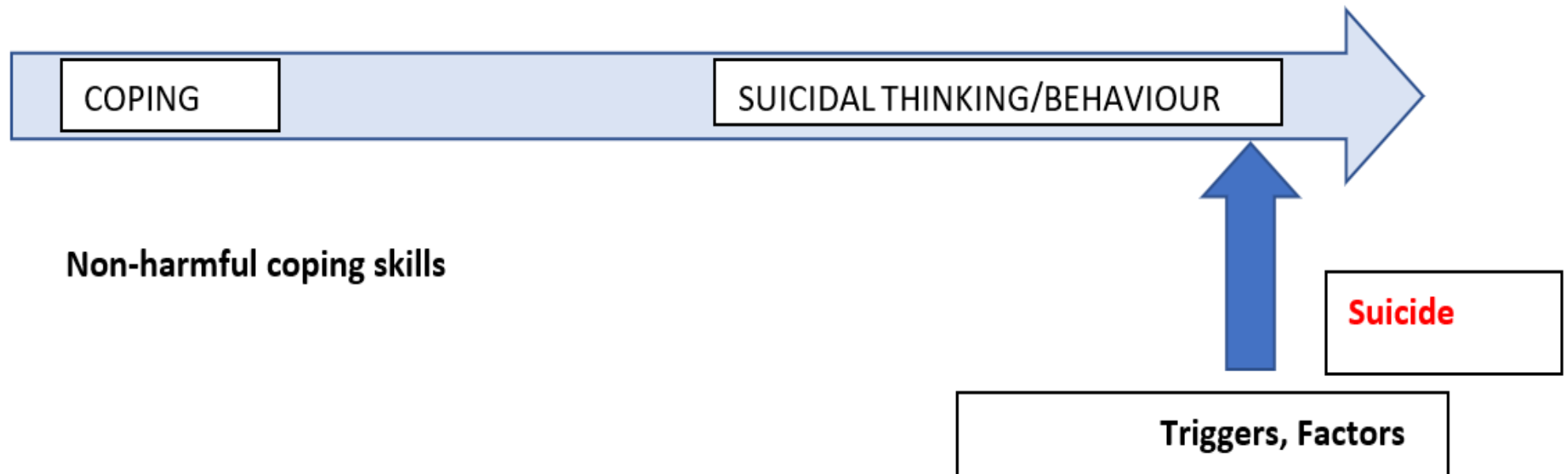
- Suicide is not 'committing ' an act
 - The preferred term is now 'died by suicide' not 'committed suicide'
 - People who survive suicide attempts, e.g., Kevin Hines say at that moment they are glad to stay alive - people want to be helped.
 - They feel like they are a burden and want an end to the pain (not necessarily to die)
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INTER-RELATIONSHIP – SELF-HARM AND SUICIDE

Self-Harm

Health risk Behaviours

Ambivalence



WHAT TO DO



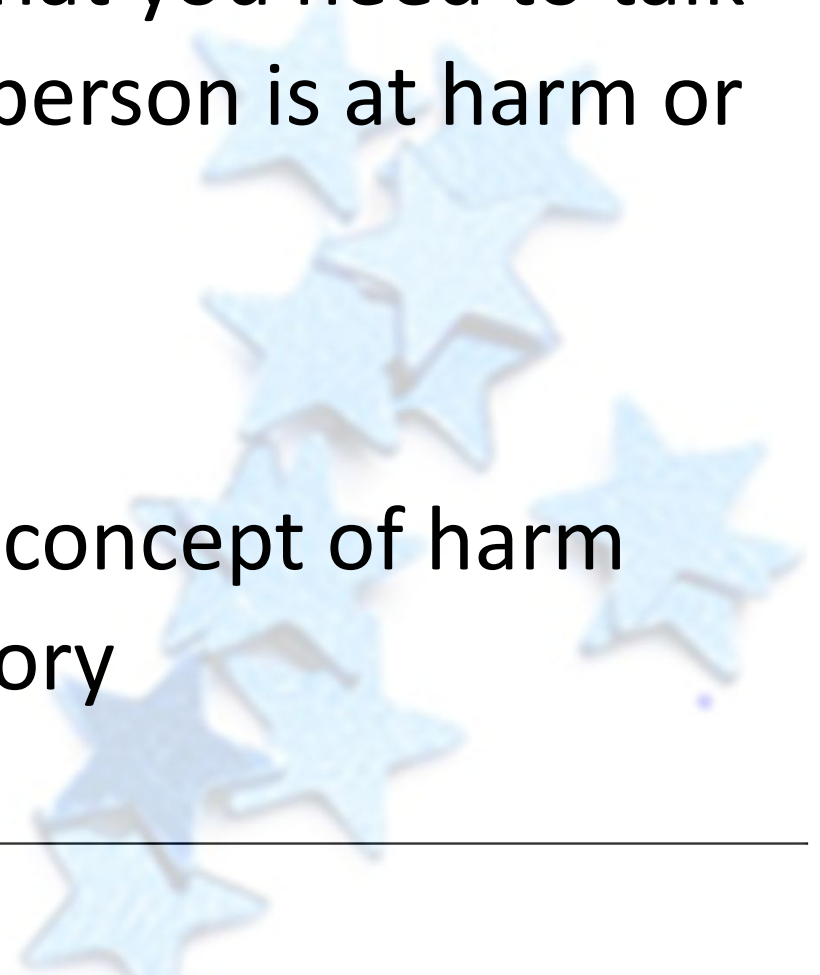
- Take seriously. Listen. Record and report.
- Ascertain if the person has plan to carry out a suicide.
- Question degree of seriousness and emotional state
- AIM TO REMOVE/RESTRICT METHOD
- Ask the question

STORM



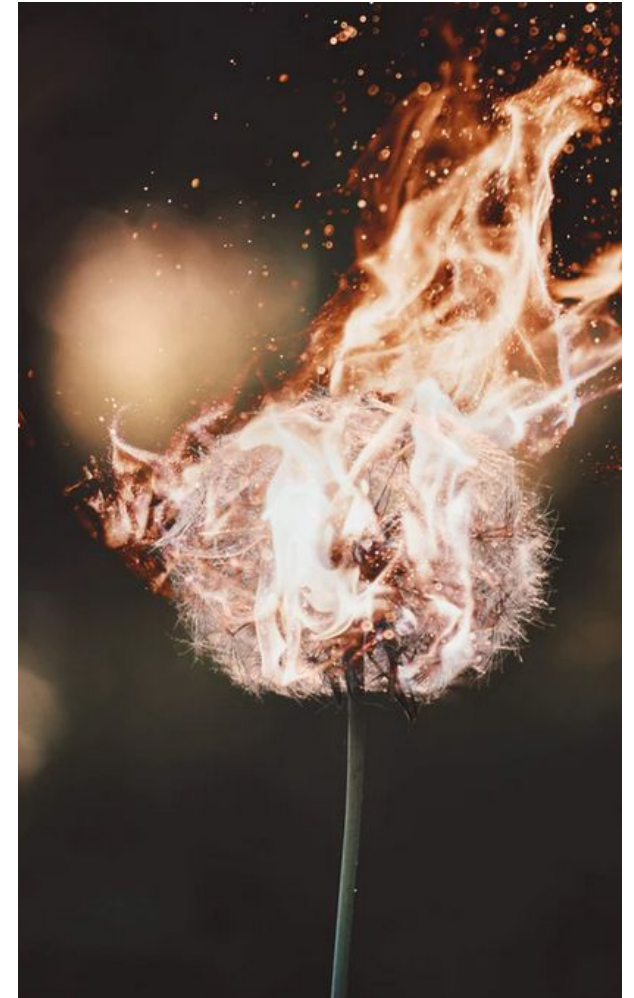
ENGAGE	LISTEN & COLLABORATE	ASK AND CLARIFY
ENVIRONMENT No interruptions Not being overheard Position – 45 degrees, side by side Time	What you hear, see and feel	BE CLEAR Signpost Explain intentions
EMPATHY Engaging the person to make their own understanding – not yours.		ASK Open to more closed
ACKNOWLEDGE Pick up on verbal and non-verbal cues Framing Be ready for reaction (distress) Acknowledge problems		Consider the language you use, 'die by suicide' less negative than 'commit suicide'
HOPEFULNESS Convey hope	Shared understanding, shared goals and shared plans	CLARIFY YOU UNDERSTAND Summarise and clarify Influence do not control

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- **Confidentiality issues** – say that you need to talk to others if you feel that the person is at harm or others
 - You may need to explore the concept of harm visually or through a social story
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ASSESSMENT OF SELF-HARM

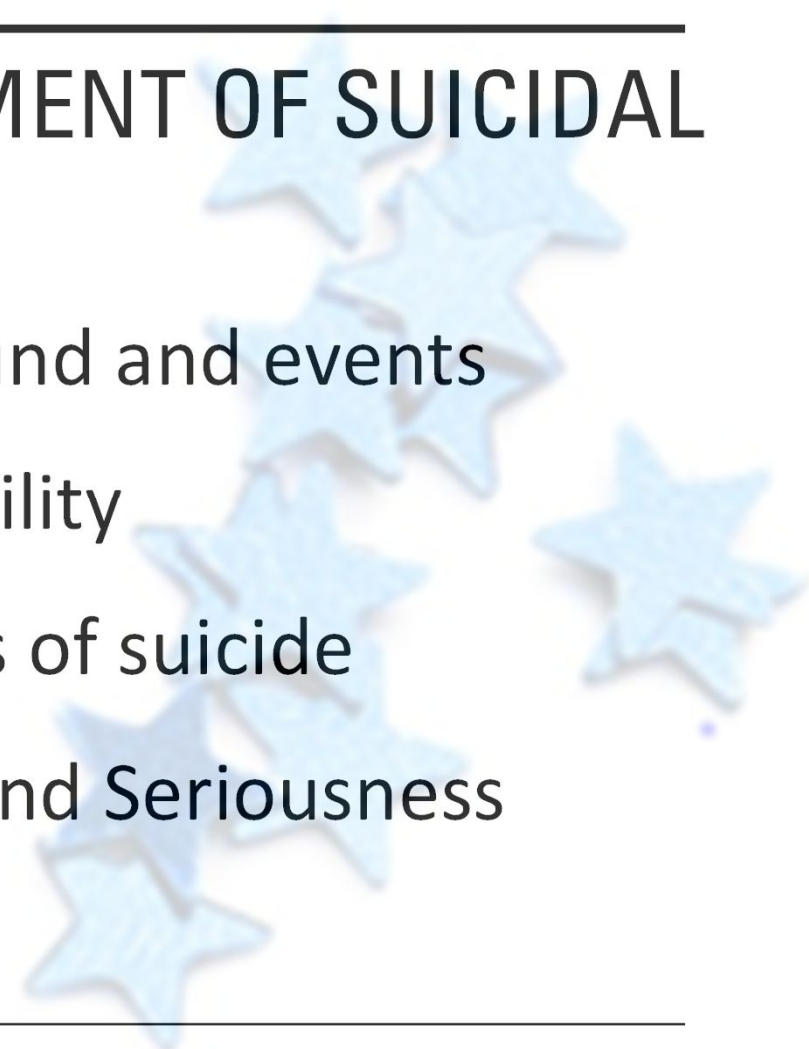
- Physical injury or poisoning – nature and severity
 - Degree and seriousness
 - Background
 - Signs of distress and vulnerability
 - Thoughts of suicide
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ASSESSMENT OF SUICIDAL INTENT

- Background and events
- Vulnerability
- Thoughts of suicide
- Degree and Seriousness



EXPRESSING HOPEFULNESS: IT IS ABOUT
ENDING THE PAIN AND NOT DYING

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kQ4XCNZdKfI>

thanks