

Talking to someone about their self-harm

It can be difficult to understand why someone you care about would self-harm. It is important to try not to panic or overreact so that the person you care about feels able to talk to you. Offer to support them through receiving professional help or trying to stop self-harming by themselves, allow them to make their own decisions.

Helpful websites about self-harm

www.mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/self-harm

www.youngminds.org.uk/find-help/feelings-and-symptoms/self-harm

www.rcpsych.ac.uk/healthadvice/problemsdisorders/self-harm.aspx

www.selfinjurysupport.org.uk

www.selfharm.co.uk

www.themix.org.uk

Contact

The Emotional Health Service

42 York Street, Twickenham TW1 3 BW

T: 020 8487 5470

Opening hours:

Monday to Thursday: 8.45am to 5.00pm

Friday: 8.45am to 4.45 pm

W: www.afcinfo.org.uk/emotionalhealthservice

Emotional Health Service



Self-harm

A leaflet for young people

What is self-harm?

Sometimes people harm themselves on purpose. There are a lot of different ways that people can hurt themselves. If a young person is intentionally inflicting harm or pain on themselves, as a way of coping with difficult feelings, this is considered to be self-harm.

It is thought that approximately 13% of people aged between 11 and 16 years self-harm. There are a number of reasons people self-harm, however some may find it difficult to explain why they do it (or believe that no one could understand why). For some young people it's a response to something that is happening in their lives. Self-harm can help reduce high levels of distress as some people experience it as a 'release' or 'transfer' of difficult feelings. Often it is associated with depression, anxiety or stress by a young person but, not always.

Tips to help you manage your self-harm

Delaying: put self-harm off for as long as you can. Make yourself watch a whole episode of your favourite TV programme before you self-harm or just make yourself wait for five minutes. Each time you delay your self-harm, increase the time delay a little bit more so that the gaps between wanting to and actually self-harming slowly increase.

Understanding: take some time to understand yourself and your self-harm. Make a mental note (or a physical note in a diary) of the times that you feel like you want to self-harm. What happened right before? Can you avoid those triggers? Consider why you might be self-harming and if there is a different solution to the problem.

Distracting: do anything that you think will take your mind off the feeling: do some exercise, listen to music, write lists, surround yourself with people that make you happy, have a cold shower, or hold ice cubes until your hands feel numb. This technique works best if you come up with your own ideas about how you might distract yourself.

Stopping self-harm

It is possible to stop yourself self-harming permanently without receiving help from a professional. In order to do this it is important to look after yourself physically and mentally.

- Be kind to yourself
- Do things that make you enjoy and present a challenge to you
- Make sure that you are eating and sleeping well
- Try to understand why you are self-harming and build a list of alternatives to self-harm to help you deal with the negative feelings
- Surround yourself with people who make you feel good
- Tell someone you trust and ask for their help

Treatment

If you would like to talk to someone about your self-harm, or if you would like help stopping, visit your GP and ask for help. Different options for dealing with self-harm include talking treatments such as individual or family therapy, support groups, or online support groups which may be helpful if you are anxious about talking to someone in person.

Important information about self-harm

If you have hurt yourself deliberately and are injured you must treat your injury as you would if you had hurt yourself accidentally. If you have an open wound make sure that it is clean before you dress it with a plaster. If you need help let someone know. If you need help dealing with your injuries but, don't want to ask someone you know, go to A&E. Health professionals are trained in treating self-harm injuries and might be able to find you someone who you can talk to about your self-harm.