

Alternatives to Self-Harm

When you want a sensation without harming yourself:

- Hold ice in your hands, against your face, arms, etc. maybe even rub the ice where you would like to cut or harm yourself
- Snap a hair tie against your wrist
- Clap your hands together until it stings
- Put Elmer's glue on your hands, let dry, then peel it off
- Write/draw on yourself
- Bite/chew something spicy or sour (hot peppers, hard candies, lemons)

When you want the illusion of seeing something similar to blood:

- Draw on yourself with red pen or body paint
- Give yourself henna or a fake tattoo
- Make "wounds" with makeup, like lipstick
- Make "wounds" with nail polish (feels cold and is hard to get off)
- Take red liquid food coloring and warm it by dropping the bottle into a cup of hot water for a few minutes. Remove the bottle from the hot water and remove the cap. Press the tip at the place you would want to cut and squeeze the food coloring slightly to let the food coloring trickle out.
- Make ice in an ice tray. Drop 6-7 drops of red food coloring into each ice cube well. Once frozen into ice cubes, take ice out. Draw on the areas you want to cut.

When you are feeling angry:

- Scribble on photos of people in magazines
- Scribble on a piece of paper until the whole paper is black
- Have a pillow fight with the wall
- Scream into a pillow
- Tear apart newspapers or magazines
- Draw a picture of what is making you angry
- Pop bubble wrap
- Pop balloons
- Write your feelings on a piece of paper then rip it up
- Throw ice cubes at the bathtub/shower wall or at a tree
- Flatten pop cans or crush plastic bottles, see how fast you can do it
- Break Sticks

When you are feeling guilty, sad or lonely:

- Instead of punishing yourself by self-harming, punish yourself by not self-harming
- Remember a happy moment and relive it in your head for while
- Try to imagine the future and things you want to do

- If you are religious, read the bible or pray
- Allow yourself to cry, crying is a healthy release of emotion
- Write down negative/unhelpful thoughts and rewrite them as positive/helpful thoughts

When you are feeling panicky or scared:

- “See, hear and feel”- 5 things, then 4 things, then 3 things, and countdown to which one makes you focused on your surroundings and calmed down
- Listen to soothing music
- Focus on your breathing
- Hug a pillow or stuffed animal
- Hug a person, with their permission
- Go for a walk outside, if it safe to do so
- Feel your pulse to prove you are alive

When you need a distraction and need to take up time:

- Listen to music
- Go on the internet (YouTube, social media, etc.)
- Count by 12s or some other interval that is difficult to count by
- Count ceiling tiles or lights
- Watch TV or a movie
- Paint your nails
- Write out song lyrics
- Memorize a poem or a new song
- Make a paper chain link to count the hours or days that you have been self-harm free
- Pay attention to your breathing
- Re-organize your room
- Take a shower or bath

When you want to think twice about harming yourself:

- Think about how you don’t want scars
- Acknowledge that self-harm is a harmful behavior, say: “I want to hurt myself” rather than “I want to cut”.
- Repeat to yourself: “I don’t deserve to be hurt”, even if you don’t believe it.
- Remember that you always have the choice not to cut- it’s up to you what you do.
- Remind yourself that the urge to self-harm is impulsive: you will only feel like cutting for short bursts of time. Ride the wave and the feeling will pass.
- Put a band-aid on the area you’d like to self-harm.
- Think about what you would say to friend if they were struggling with the same things you are and try to be a good friend to yourself.