

# alice halden

• art therapy and counselling •

## SELF-HARM & SUICIDAL IDEATION SUPPORT RESOURCE

The below recommendations are general advice only and do not replace professional mental health care. This resource is ideally used in conjunction with a Safety Plan developed in session. If you or someone you know is risking their safety or the safety of others please call 000, or reach out to Crisis Support Lines which can be found on my website.

### SELF-HARM ALTERNATIVES

Self-harm is the body's maladaptive (unhelpful) attempt to regulate itself, please engage with the below alternatives at your own risk. Know that you are not alone. Healing is a journey, and small steps can lead to meaningful change. Whether you are using this for yourself or a loved one, please approach it with kindness and patience.



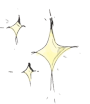
### 1. ALTERNATIVES FOR RELEASING INTENSE EMOTIONS (ANGER, OVERWHELM, FRUSTRATION)

#### ◆ Physical Sensory Strategies

- Rip up paper, fabric, or cardboard.
- Smash ice cubes in a sink or bathtub. Hold hands in ice water for 45 secs.
- Scribble aggressively on paper, then tear it up.
- Pound clay, knead putty, or squeeze stress balls.
- Snap a rubber band or hair tie on the wrist (only if non-triggering).
- Stomp on the ground or break up cardboard boxes.

#### ◆ Creative Outlets

- Use red paint, markers, or lipstick to "draw" on the skin instead of cutting.
- Write down angry thoughts and then scribble over or burn them safely.
- Drum or play loud music, physically engaging with the sound.





## 2. ALTERNATIVES FOR EMOTIONAL NUMBING OR DISSOCIATION

- ◆ Cold Sensory Stimulation
  - Hold an ice cube or hold hands in ice water for 45 seconds.
  - Splash cold water on the face (mimics the "diving reflex" to calm the nervous system).
  - Use frozen orange peels or cold metal objects against the skin.
- ◆ Deep Pressure & Grounding
  - Wrap up in a weighted blanket or heavy hoodie.
  - Press against a wall or do a slow, grounding body scan.
  - Use a sensory fidget tool like a smooth stone or worry bead.
  - Trace patterns on the skin with a dull object (e.g., a spoon, makeup brush).

## 3. ALTERNATIVES FOR EMOTIONAL OVERWHELM OR ANXIETY

- ◆ Mindfulness & Breathing Techniques
  - Try box breathing: inhale for 4, hold for 4, exhale for 4, hold for 4.
  - Blow bubbles or use a pinwheel to regulate breathing.
  - Visualise a "safe enough place" and sketch or paint it.
  - 5 things you can see, 4 you hear, 3 you touch, 2 you smell, and 1 you taste.
- ◆ Creative & Verbal Expression
  - Create a "mind dump" journal—write down all thoughts without filtering.
  - Colour in a mandala or engage in repetitive, calming art.
  - Write song lyrics, poetry, or short stories expressing emotions.

## 4. ALTERNATIVES FOR SELF-PUNISHMENT OR SELF-LOATHING

- ◆ Self-Compassionate Touch & Self-Soothing
  - Apply lotion slowly, focusing on each part of the body.
  - Hug yourself tightly or hold a warm mug of tea.
  - Use a soft object (plush toy, fabric) as a comfort tool.
  - Trace loving words or affirmations on your skin.
- ◆ Affirming & Reframing Strategies
  - Write a kind letter to your future self.
  - Make a self-care box with reminders of safe people and positive affirmations.
  - Look at photos or objects that connect you to feelings of safety.





## 5. ALTERNATIVES FOR SEEKING CONTROL & STRUCTURE

- ◆ Organising & Repetitive Actions
  - Sort objects by colour, size, or type (e.g., beads, buttons, Lego).
  - Make a schedule or to-do list to restore a sense of order.
  - Fold and unfold paper (origami, paper cranes).
- ◆ Creative Rituals for Control
  - Create a "control collage" with words or images representing personal agency.
  - Use structured art, such as Zentangle or geometric designs.
  - Set small, achievable challenges (e.g., "I will hold an ice cube for 30 seconds instead of self-harming.").

## 6. ALTERNATIVES FOR SOCIAL CONNECTION & SUPPORT SEEKING

- ◆ Reaching Out
  - Text or call a trusted friend or therapist.
  - Write in a private or online support group (e.g., a self-harm recovery forum).
  - Use "I need help" code words with a trusted person.
- ◆ Comfort from Connection
  - Listen to a favourite podcast or watch comforting YouTube videos.
  - Cuddle a pet or spend time with a supportive person.
  - Engage in a co-regulation activity (baking, painting together, watching a show).

## DEVELOPING A PERSONALISED COPING PLAN

Each individual responds differently to alternatives, so it's helpful to test and tailor strategies. At home you may want to:

- ✓ Create a "Coping Toolkit" (a box or list with their chosen alternatives).
- ✓ Identify what works best for different emotions (anger vs. dissociation vs. sadness).
- ✓ Keep a journal or visual tracker to notice patterns and progress.

Albury Wodonga Health Ph: 02 6058 4444

24/7 Crisis Support Line: 1300 104 211

<https://www.awh.org.au/services-departments/mental-health>

