

SUPPORT IF YOU ARE SELF HARMING



What Is Self Harm?

Self harm is when you deliberately hurt yourself in response to any number of emotional situations. It is a way of dealing with unbearable distress or emotional pain. Self harm can take many different forms.

DIRECT PHYSICAL HARM

- Cutting or scratching yourself;
- Biting yourself;
- Hitting or punching yourself;
- Hitting walls;
- Pulling out your hair;
- Stabbing yourself with small, sharp objects.
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UNHEALTHY STRATEGIES

- Using drugs to cope;
- Drinking alcohol as a way to numb thoughts and emotions;
- Not eating regularly;
- Eating 'junk' type food to make you feel better;
- Making yourself sick after eating;
- Over-eating.

RISKY BEHAVIOURS

- Spending long periods of time on addictive behaviours such as gaming; social media or gambling;
- Over exercising or exercising when you have an injury;
- Getting into risky situations including fights or risky sexual behaviours.

SUMMARY

Self harm can bring a temporary relief from your feelings, but it is not a long term solution. Falling into a cycle of using self harm is very easy to do, however, breaking the cycle and finding other ways to manage is far more beneficial.



Why Do I Self Harm?

There is no one reason as to why people self harm. Some people can find it hard to understand why they do it, but they have an overwhelming urge to hurt themselves

Every one who self harms will have their own reasons for why they do it.

Some people self harm in order to release emotions, whilst others do it in order to feel something if they are numb.

Some people who do self harm have been able to explain why they do so. Some of the main reasons for self harming are;

Expressing feelings that feel too difficult to say out loud or to tell someone about.

A way of temporarily reducing intense feelings and emotions.

To try and gain some control when everything else in life is feeling overwhelming and out of control.

As a way to punishing yourself for experience, situations or feelings.

Expressing feelings and thoughts about seriously harming yourself or suicide.

Misunderstandings About Self Harm



Some people can find self harm difficult to understand and as a result they may seem judgemental about it. It can be shocking and upsetting for someone to learn that their loved one or friend is intentionally hurting themselves and their initial reactions may be fuelled by shock and care.

There are some people who do not fully understand why someone would self harm and they may dismiss it as 'attention seeking' rather than someone who is in pain and requiring support.

In reality, self harm is used by people for a number of reasons. Some people will keep their self harming hidden from others, whilst others will let it be known as a way of asking for support.



Support in the Short Term

Seeking support, developing more safe coping strategies and working your way to stopping feeling like you need to self harm is an important step to take. Some people may be able to stop straight away, whilst others may take some time to find new ways to cope.

However, if you are not currently in a position to stop self harming straight away, then it is important to make sure that you are being as safe as you can. This may mean having a kit with sterile wipes and dressings available to help with any physical wounds.

In a crisis situation, you can seek support from organisations such as the Samaritans or by texting SHOUT to 85258, to access 24/7 support. If you are injured or at risk, you can also go to A and E for support.

Other short term, 'in the moment' strategies include:

BE PHYSICAL

Go for a walk;
Hit a cushion;
Tear up some old cardboard.



FIND A DISTRACTION

Play some music;
Watch some TV;
Go out for a walk.

REACH OUT

Contact a friend or family member;
Contact a support organisation.

BE CREATIVE

Write down your feelings;
Journal;
Draw, doodle or colour.



GROUND YOURSELF

Deep Breathing;
Wrap yourself in a blanket;
Engage your senses.

GIVE YOURSELF TIME

Try to delay your self harm behaviour.
Focus on your thoughts and feelings.



How Do I Stop Self Harming?

For most people who self harm, their ultimate goal would be to be able to stop using it as a strategy and find other ways to manage their emotional pain.

This can take time, but there are steps out there that can support a move away from feeling like self harm is the only way that you have to cope.

Some suggestions are:



Talk. Find a support network or a supportive person within either your friends and/or family circle. It can be hard to take that step to talk to someone, but once you do, it can help enormously.

Get Professional Help. Visit your GP or contact a local mental health team to make a referral. Alternatively, you can find a counsellor/therapist in private practice through places such as The BACP.

Write. Through keeping a diary or a journal, you can write out your thoughts and feelings. This can help to process them, alongside helping you to see patterns or triggers.

Look After Yourself. Get a good amount of sleep. Eat healthily. Cut down on stimulants. Exercise or get out and about in nature. Socialise with friends. Be kind to yourself.

Do Your Research. Using social media platforms and mental health support services online can help you to understand more about self harm and mental health. Avoid spending too much time online though.

Plan. Think about what you can do next time you feel like self harming. Put a safety plan in place which outlines steps you can take to make yourself safe.