



HEALTHIER MINDS



Self-Harm Support Pack

In this support pack you will find information, advice, strategies and resources to support a young person who is self-harming. Any plan or strategy should be fully discussed and agreed with the young person and reviewed regularly to monitor their progress.

Promoting Wellbeing: Preventive and Reactive Strategies

Self-harm is most often used as a coping strategy for dealing with emotional pain, distress or a feeling of numbness. Therefore, reducing the urge to self-harm requires the identification or development of alternative or less harmful coping strategies.

Remember it is probably unrealistic to expect the young person to stop the self-harming behaviour immediately or completely. Make a plan to reduce the behaviour by trying and practicing different approaches.

Alternatives to Self-Harm

Traditionally recommended alternatives like drawing on the skin with red pen, flicking an elastic band against the wrist, pressing ice against the skin or biting into food with a strong taste such as chilli or ginger can occasionally effectively replace self-harming behaviour, however, more recently concerns have been raised that they may increase the behaviour as they cannot fully replace the sensation sought by self-harming. This is not to say that such alternatives are never helpful and if considered carefully with the young person and monitored may be effective at reducing the self-harm behaviour.

Distraction Techniques and Coping Strategies

Distraction techniques are likely to be more effective at reducing the need to self-harm. The urge to self-harm is often likened to a wave which builds to a point and then dissipates over a period of time. Therefore, if the person can be encouraged to use a distracting activity when the urge to self-harm appears they may be able to avoid self-harming while the impulse is strong and find they have less need for it as the feeling dissipates. These distraction techniques have been identified by young people with lived experience of self-harming as helpful when the urge to self-harm appears. These same techniques are also helpful coping strategies for reducing and managing feelings of stress, anxiety, low mood and numbness.

- Go for a vigorous walk or run or do some high impact exercise
- Re-organise a room
- Hobbies e.g. baking, painting, drawing, sewing, knitting, sport, coding
- Play a musical instrument
- Read a book, magazine, comic
- Keep a journal or diary of your feelings
- Watch a favourite movie, video clip or listen to music
- Contact a friend
- Practice mindfulness or deep breathing
- Burst bubble wrap
- Play a game – Wordle, Candy Crush
- Take a shower
- Occupy hands with safe objects e.g. a rubix cube, stone, stress ball, blue tac, fidget spinner, popper
- Play a video game

Identifying the Reason for the Self-Harm

Identifying the function, the reason or what the person gets from the self-harming behaviour is crucial for identifying alternative and distraction strategies. Here you will find ideas based on the identified function.

When the self-harm occurs to cope with emotional distress:

Watch or listen to some comedy or something light-hearted

Draw or paint – e.g. [Mindful Colouring](#)

Listen to uplifting music

Write out thoughts or feelings in a journal

Carry 'safe' objects in pockets that can occupy your mind and hands

Practice [mindfulness or deep breathing](#)

Have regular check-ins with a trusted adult

Write down a list of your strengths and talents and make a plan to spend more time on these Spend time with people who make you feel good

Keep a journal of how you feel

[Make a Self-Soothe Box](#)

Do something to distract yourself for at least 15 minutes [The 15 Minute Rule](#)

When the self-harm occurs to stay alive:

Don't keep your feelings to yourself – reach out to someone you trust.

Make your environment safe – remove things that you could harm you - knives, pills or razors

Call a helpline such as [Childline](#), [Samaritans](#) or text [SHOUT to 85258](#)

Do something to distract yourself for at least 15 minutes [The 15 Minute Rule](#)

When the self-harm occurs to escape from feeling numb or disconnected (desire to feel something):

Chew something with a strong taste (chilli or mint)

Do some vigorous exercise – running, press ups

Draw on yourself with a red pen

Have a cold shower or squeeze ice

Practice [mindfulness](#) to help you feel more grounded

Do something to distract yourself for at least 15 minutes [The 15 Minute Rule](#)

When the self-harm occurs to gain a sense of control:

Write down some achievable tasks for the next few hours or day and work through them

Take on a role that carries responsibility or decision making e.g. part-time job, volunteering, pupil council representative, team sport

Do something to distract yourself for at least 15 minutes [The 15 Minute Rule](#)

When the self-harm occurs for self-punishment

Do some physical exercise

Try to release negative energy by hitting a punch bag or pillow

Write down how you feel on paper, then rip it up [Make a Self-Soothe Box](#) or memory box containing good things in your life, achievements, things you are proud of and grateful for

Have a hot shower

Do something to distract yourself for at least 15 minutes [The 15 Minute Rule](#)

When the self-harm occurs to connect with others:

Call, text or arrange to meet up with a friend

Create a list with a close friend of positive things you want to do or achieve in the next few days, month or even year

Plan a trip, event, or catch up with someone

Volunteer in your local community

Avoid triggering media content such as pro self-harm or suicide websites. Try joining more positive online forums such as a recovery group or general chat for young people like [Togetherall](#) (16+)

Do something to distract yourself for at least 15 minutes [The 15 Minute Rule](#)

THINGS THAT HELP ANXIETY

BY @twentysevenLKLD



PHONE A
FRIEND



DEEP
BREATHING



HOLD ON
TO SOMEONE



GO FOR A
WALK



SHOWERS &
BATHS WITH
OILS



ENGAGE ALL 5
SENSES



DISTRACTIONS
(TV, PAINT NAILS,
WALK DOG)



CALMING
MUSIC



DO SOMETHING
WITH YOUR
HANDS



WRITE IT
OUT



DRINK COLD
WATER



CUDDLE A
WEIGHTED
BLANKET

15 Minute Rule

Research suggests that the urge to self-injure dissipates over time if not acted upon just like the wave analogy from earlier. Based on this finding, the 15 minute rule encourages the person to choose to do something else for a short period of time. Read more about the 15 minute rule here:

[The 15 Minute Rule](#)

“When the urge to self-injure comes upon you, check the time and tell yourself that you have felt the urge but you are going to choose to hold off of any self-harming behaviour for 15 minutes. For the duration of this 15 minute period keep busy and try one of the distraction techniques above. At the end of the 15 minutes check how you feel and make the choice about trying for another 15 minutes. You are in control, you make the choice.”

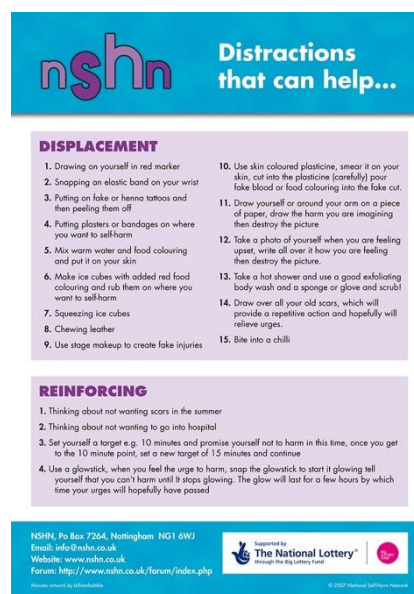
Shout – Little Book of Coping Skills

To download your free little book of coping skills click on the picture below:



NSHN Distractions That Can Help

For distractions and coping strategies click on the picture below:



The Penumbra charity has launched the [Self-Harm Network Scotland website](#) packed with useful information, advice and resources.

You can also get help for yourself or someone you are supporting.

<https://selfharmnetworkscotland.org.uk/>

Make a Self-Soothe Box

Find out how others have made a self-soothe box to reduce symptoms of panic, anxiety and low mood at Young Minds:



Safety Planning and Diary Keeping

Self-harm safety plans are a useful way to document your discussions with the young person, identify, triggers, helpful coping strategies and sources of support. It will also help monitor progress and keep the young person focused on the goal of reducing self-harming.

Safety plans can take many forms and do not need to be done with pen and paper. Apps such as Calmharm can provide a digital form of safety planning as can making a note of the plan directly in the young persons' mobile phone. Alternatively, complete the plan on one of the 2 suggested formats and keep a paper copy and/or photograph stored in the young person's mobile phone. Let the young person decide the best way to record, store and refer to their safety plan.

A diary is another useful tool to help the young person identify triggers to self-harming behaviours and track their progress.

“My Safety Plan”

I know I'm at risk of self harming when I feel

“My self harm is often triggered by”

When I feel like this I will try -

Distractions are good here

This feeling will pass, I can do this

“

”

“

”

“

”

Coping strategies I can use

“I will reach out to”

Name _____

Name _____

I can get help online from

text SHOUT to 85258

www.samaritans.org/?nation=scotland 116 123

www.themix.org.uk/get-support/speak-to-our-team

“My Safety Plan”

My self harm is often triggered by:

.....

I know I'm at risk of self harming when I feel (or do):

.....

When I feel like this I will try (distractions are good here):

.....

Coping strategies I can use:

.....

I will reach out to:

Name

Name

Name

Name

I can get help online from:

text SHOUT to 85258

www.samaritans.org/?nation=scotland 116 123

www.themix.org.uk/get-support/speak-to-our-team

“This feeling will pass, I can do this!”

My Wellbeing Diary

Date and Time	What was I doing or what was happening?	How was I feeling and how strong was the feeling (0 very mild – 10 very strong)?	What did I do?	What could I do next time instead to help me feel better?

Find Support

Ripple Suicide Prevention Online Interceptive Tool

<https://www.ripplesuicideprevention.com/>

Ripple is an innovative online interceptive tool designed to ensure more help and support is provided to individuals in distress. By installing Ripple on your device, anyone searching terms related to self-harm or suicide will be connected to helpful and free 24/7 sources of support.

Get Help Quickly

Penumbra Live Chat Service

<https://selfharmnetworkscotland.org.uk/>

5 days a week, 6pm – 10pm

For anyone aged 12 + across Scotland who needs support with self-harm



Childline Scotland

Call 0800 11 11

www.childline.org.uk

Free and confidential helpline for children and young people available 24/7. See the website for more information, advice, videos and resources.

Give us a Shout

Text Shout to 85258 for free text support 24/7

<https://giveusashout.org/>

Alumina

Free, online 7 week course for young people aged 10-17 struggling with self-harm. Each course has up to 14 young people across the UK.

<https://alumina.selfharm.co.uk/>

Papyrus

Call Hopeline UK on 0800 068 41 41

www.papyrus-uk.org

For anyone struggling with feelings of suicide. Available from 9am – midnight every day.

Samaritans

Call 116 123

www.samaritans.org

24 hour confidential helpline for those in crisis or who need to talk.

The Mix

Call 0808 808 4994

<https://www.themix.org.uk/get-support/speak-to-our-team>

Available 7 days a week from 4pm till 11pm

For anyone aged 16 or over**Breathing Space**

Call 0800 83 85 87

<https://breathingspace.scot/>

Free, confidential phoneline for anyone in Scotland over the age of 16, feeling low, anxious or depressed. Available Monday to Thursday from 6pm - 2am and Friday to Monday 6pm - 6am.

Togetherall

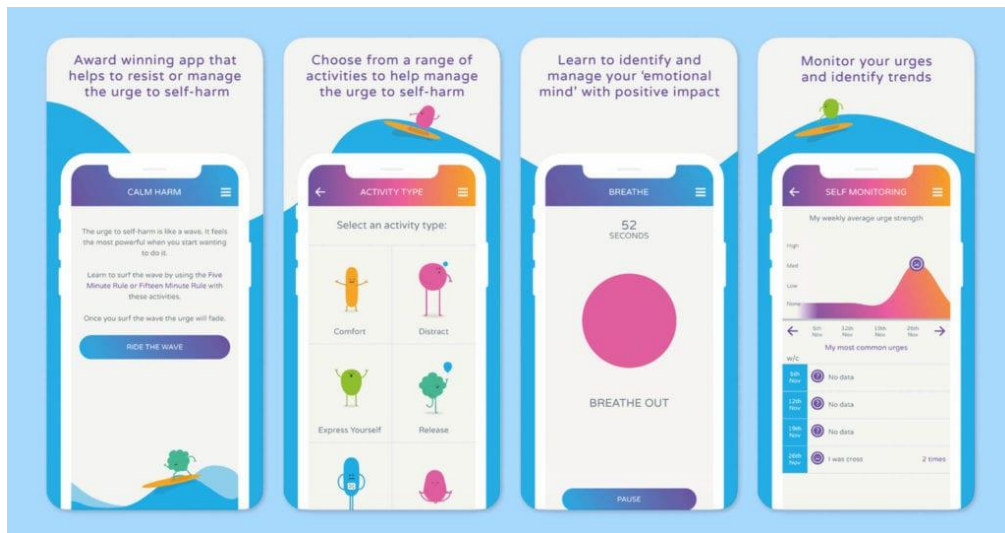
<https://togetherall.com/en-gb/>

safe, online community where people support each other anonymously to improve mental health and wellbeing.

Apps**CALMHARM**

<https://calmharm.co.uk/>

Download the free Calm Harm App to help you manage or resist the urge to self-harm.



Samaritans Self-Help App

<https://selfhelp.samaritans.org/>

Keep track of you are feeling, get help and advice for things you can do to cope, feel better and stay safe.



Helpful Websites about Self-Harm

Harmless

<https://harmless.org.uk/>

Organisation which works to address and overcome issues related to self-harm and suicide.

Heads Above the Waves

<https://hatw.co.uk/>

Organisation which raises awareness of depression and self-harm in young people. Hear other people's stories and get help.

Life Signs Self Injury Guidance and Network Support

<https://www.lifesigns.org.uk/>

Comprehensive information and support.

National Self-Harm Network

<https://www.nshn.co.uk/>

Information, advice and online support forum.

Self Injury Support

<https://www.selfinjurysupport.org.uk/>

Support for women and girls.

Websites with helpful information, advice and resources about emotional health and wellbeing

Aye Mind

<https://ayemind.com/resource-map/>

Childline Scotland

www.childline.org.uk

Cool 2 Talk

<https://cool2talk.org/health-info-zone/>

SAMH

<https://www.samh.org.uk/get-involved/going-to-be/information-help/children-and-young-people>

<https://www.samh.org.uk/about-mental-health/mental-health-problems/self-harm>

See Me

<https://www.seemescotland.org/young-people/information-for-young-people/>

The Mix

<https://www.themix.org.uk/>

Young Minds

www.youngminds.org.uk

<https://www.youngminds.org.uk/young-person/my-feelings/self-harm>

If you are looking for information on.....

[Bereavement or loss](#)

[LGBTQ+](#)

[Eating Disorders](#)

[Anxiety](#)

Helplines for Parents and Carers

Children 1st Parentline

08000 28 22 33

<https://www.children1st.org.uk/help-for-families/parentline-scotland/>

Available 9am-9pm weekdays; 9am-noon weekends.

Young Minds Parents Helpline and Webchat

Call 0808 802 5544

<https://www.youngminds.org.uk/parent/parents-helpline-and-webchat/>

Call free for detailed advice, emotional support and signposting about a child or young person up to the age of 25. Available from 9:30am - 4pm, Monday - Friday.

Information, advice and support for Families

<https://www.familylives.org.uk/advice/teenagers/health-wellbeing/self-harm>

Support for Education Staff

<https://www.educationsupport.org.uk/>

UK charity which supports the mental health and wellbeing of education staff. Visit the website for information, advice and resources or **call the helpline on 08000 562 561**.

Other Relevant Organisations and Websites

CELCIS

www.celcis.org

Centre for Excellence for Children's Care and Protection are the go-to organisation for specialist knowledge concerning the care and protection of children in Scotland, and work with people at all levels (strategic, operational and practice) in communities, across the country and internationally, to improve how services can be developed and delivered to meet the needs of children, young people and their families. The organisation bring together insight, influence and impact in ways to make positive, transformational change happen here in Scotland and across the world.

East Renfrewshire Healthier Minds

<https://blogs.glowscotland.org.uk/er/healthierminds/>

Comprehensive information and resources on a range of emotional wellbeing topics.

Families Outside

www.familiesoutside.org.uk

Charity supporting families affected by imprisonment.

Mindreel

<https://mindreel.org.uk/>

Mindreel is an initiative to create a valuable learning resource using educational films that address a wide range of mental health issues.

Papyrus

www.papyrus-uk.org

Papyrus is the leading charity working towards prevention young suicide. Find help, advice and resources for those thinking about suicide, parents/carers or other family members and professionals.

Place2Be

<https://www.place2be.org.uk/>

Place2Be is a children's mental health charity with provides support, advice and training to pupils, families and staff in UK schools.

Scotland Suicide Prevention Action Plan

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/scotlands-suicide-prevention-action-plan-life-matters/>

<http://www.healthscotland.scot/health-topics/suicide/suicide-prevention-overview>

The Cybersmile Foundation

<https://www.cybersmile.org/>

The Cybersmile Foundation is a multi award winning anti cyberbullying non profit that provides expert help and advice around cyberbullying.

Young Scot Choices for Life

<https://young.scot/campaigns/national/choices-for-life>

Young Scot Choices for Life aims to raise awareness amongst young people aged 11-18, about the dangers of smoking, alcohol and drugs as well as online safety and information on how to deal with negative peer pressure.

Youth Link Scotland Heids Together: A Wellbeing and Youth Work Resource

<https://www.youthlinkscotland.org/resources/heids-together-a-wellbeing-youth-work-resource/>

Wellbeing toolkits, podcasts, activities and planners on wide range of mental health issues for use with children and young people.

Sources and Additional Reading

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Mental Health Foundation: The Truth about Self-Harm

<https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/sites/default/files/Truth%20about%20self%20harm%20WEB%20FINAL.pdf>

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<https://www.gov.scot/publications/national-guidance-child-protection-scotland/pages/8/>

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<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1991/50/contents>

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