

Self-harm Awareness - Information for Parents & Staff

Adapted from 'What's the Harm' training materials



What is self-harm?

Self-harm is when someone deliberately hurts themselves as a way of coping with emotional pain and distress.

Self-injury, like cutting, burning, biting, inserting objects and hair pulling are common ways that people self-harm. However, there are many other forms of self-harm including risk taking behaviours such as smoking, drinking, taking drugs and the use of violence towards self and others. Most of the time people who self-harm do not intend to kill themselves, self-harm is often described as being like a lifebelt that helps a person escape when they feel like they are drowning. However, there are times when someone's emotional distress can become too much to deal with and they might think about suicide as the only way to escape their feelings. Self-harm and suicide are different as the intention of self-harm is to feel better and the intention of suicide is to end all feelings. If you are worried that someone has suicidal thoughts seek support for this and if someone is in immediate danger contact the emergency services by calling 999.

Why do people self-harm?

There are lots of reasons why people self-harm and they are different for every person. It could be related to something that happened in the past, such as a childhood trauma or something that is happening in their life right now.

Many of us have raised anxiety at the moment due to the **Coronavirus** pandemic. If your child has never used self-harm as a coping strategy before it is unlikely they will start to self-harm due to the current situation, but all young people should be encouraged to use positive mental health strategies (see links on next page for more information on this).

Young people who do use self-harm as a coping strategy or have done in the past may use self-harm to manage their anxiety related to Coronavirus. You will also be more aware of your child's self-harm, due to increased time at home together. The image below provides some useful responses when talking about self-harm. It is important to continue to follow advice given by professionals working with your family and to also look after your own mental health.



Telephone Helplines

Childline Scotland: A confidential helpline for children and young people in difficulty

0800 111

Parentline Scotland (Children's 1st): For parents and carers living in Scotland looking for advice & support

08000 28 22 33

The Samaritans Glasgow: A telephone helpline for people struggling to cope or thinking about suicide

0141 116 123

Youngminds Parent Helpline: Offers help to parents and cares about any young person under 25

0808 802 5544

Online Resources:

Child Mind Institute: Supporting families during Covid19 – various resources and links for parents
childmind.org/coping-during-covid-19-resources-for-parents/

LifeSIGNS: Self-injury guidance and network support
www.lifesigns.org.uk/

Self injury Support: Support service for women and girls affected by self-injury, trauma and abuse. They also provide information and self-help tools for anyone to use, with some recently added information about self-care in Lockdown.
www.selfinjurysupport.org.uk

SelfharmUK: A project dedicated to supporting young people impacted by self-harm
www.selfharmUK.co.uk

Scottish Association for Mental Health: Information on supporting your own mental health and that of your family.
www.SAMH.org.uk

Young Minds: Resources available for young people and the adults supporting them. See link below for specific resources in relation to self-harm:
<https://youngminds.org.uk/resources/school-resources/?f2=10144#listing>

See Eve's 'self-soothe box' for a great way to manage feelings of anxiety or panic
youngminds.org.uk/blog/how-to-make-a-self-soothe-box/