

# ABOUT SELF-HARM

## What is self-harm?

Anything that someone does to harm or injure themselves as a way to deal with difficult emotions can be seen as self-harm.

## Why do people self-harm?

If you self-harm it is usually as a result of another problem. For example, you could be feeling anxious, depressed or being bullied, and it might seem like the only way to cope with your feelings. It's not always a really big thing that leads to self-harm. If you self-harm, you might not even be sure how it started.

## What to do about self-harm

### I'm having thoughts about self-harming, what do I do?

We recommend that you tell someone how you are feeling. It's better to talk to someone and get help, rather than keep it all inside. They should then be able to point you in the right direction for any further support that you might want or need.

The fact that you are having these thoughts but not acting on them is really positive. What are you already doing to stop those thoughts turning into actions? That's already a skill you have that you can use.

Maybe try some other, less risky, things to distract yourself, or to help express how you are feeling. (There are some ideas at the end of this handout.)

### I want to stop self-harming, what do I do?

It's great that you have recognised the behaviour you are engaging in, and feel ready to make a change. There are different forms of support available, depending on your particular circumstances. We recommend that you speak to someone you trust about finding the right source of support for you.

With the right support, it's very possible to reduce self-harm or to stop all together.

## **I want to tell someone about my self-harm but I'm worried they'll judge me.**

We can understand why you might be worried. Sometimes people accidentally say the wrong thing when they don't understand something, or if they feel a strong emotion (such as being worried about you). We would recommend that you make a plan - what you want to say, when you want to say it, and where you want to have the conversation. It might be better to pick a moment when that person has time to listen, rather than throw it into conversation when they're in the middle of something else.

If the conversation doesn't go quite as you had hoped, there are other people who care about you and will want to help (even if those people are at the end of a helpline or via webchat, e.g, Childline, Addaction - see below).

### **Who can I talk to about self-harm?**

At school, you can talk to one of the Mental Health Ambassadors, a Guidance Teacher, the school nurse, or any other adult that you trust. You can also talk to your GP about what is going on for you.

If you want to talk to a member of your family but are worried about how they will react, you could ask an adult from school to help you with this conversation.

**Remember, you can also call Childline - 0800 1111 or use Addaction webchat - <https://www.addaction.org.uk/webchat>** (click on the speech bubble in the right hand corner of the webpage.)

## **My friend is self-harming, what do I do?**

Thank you for caring about your friend. They are lucky to have you.

If you can, it's really important for you to try and find out if a responsible adult knows about your friend's self-harm. If no responsible adults know about it, the best thing to do is to tell one, even if you feel like a bad friend. At the end of the day, their safety has to come first, and perhaps they aren't in the right frame of mind to be able to see that.

## Other ways of coping

When you're feeling emotions that make you want to self-harm, it's good to find other ways of coping. Here are some ideas.

### If you're feeling:

#### Alone or isolated

Try: talking to someone, writing down how you feel, walking the dog or stroking a pet, wrapping a blanket around yourself, meeting up with a friend, or watching your favourite comedy show.

#### Angry

Try: punching something like a pillow, kicking a football against a wall, screwing up paper and throwing it, snapping twigs, squeezing clay, hitting a rolled up newspaper on a door frame, screaming, crying, using up some energy - go for a walk/swim/go to the gym/ride a bike/go running.

#### You're not good enough

Try: listening to music, having a bubble bath, using aromatherapy oils, phoning a friend, writing, painting, or writing a letter to yourself saying 'I love YOU because....'

#### Like you can't control things

Try: organising something, cleaning or tidying, doing a puzzle, setting a target time (for example, saying you won't harm for 15 minutes, and then if you can last, try another 15 minutes).

#### Like you want to escape

Try: having a hot or cold shower, drawing on your body with red pen, massaging lotion into the places you would normally harm, squeezing ice cubes or biting on lemon for the "shock factor".

*Source: [www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)*

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### Want to Know More?

Childline <https://www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/your-feelings/self-harm/>

Young Minds <https://youngminds.org.uk/find-help/feelings-and-symptoms/self-harm>