

## What is self-harm?

Self-Harm is when you hurt yourself as a way of coping with difficult or overwhelming feelings, memories or experiences.

There are many forms of self-harm.

Some of them include injuring yourself in a physical way such as cutting, burning or scratching your skin. It can also include injuring yourself by hitting yourself or punching walls, poisoning yourself or overdosing.

Self-harm can also be less obvious such as putting yourself in risky situations, excessive exercise, over-eating or under-eating.

Self-harm can make you feel better and might enable you to deal with difficult feelings temporarily or for a short while.

However, self-harm can also bring up difficult feelings and might make you feel worse. You may feel embarrassed or ashamed of it.

You may be worried about other people judging or worrying about you. You may even fear that they ask you to stop self-harming immediately.

These and other worries might mean that you keep your self-harm hidden from anyone. This is a common reaction.

## Why do people self-harm?

The reasons why people self-harm can vary from person to person.

People report a variety of reasons such as dealing with difficult feelings, memories or situations and others do not always understand why they are hurting themselves.

It is important to understand that self-harm is not necessarily a way of seeking attention.

Here are some examples of reasons why people say they hurt themselves:

- To create a valve for feelings that feel unbearable
- To change an emotional pain into a physical pain
- To feel in control
- To feel real or connected with the world around you
- To feel something
- To care for yourself by looking after your wounds
- To express something that feels difficult to put in words
- To express self-hatred

It is ok *not* to know or *not* to understand why you are self-harming; you can still ask for help. In fact talking to somebody in a confidential setting might help you to understand your self-harm better and might in turn help you to look after yourself in a different way.

## What can I do if I know somebody self-harms?

*This information is for family or friends who want to support someone who self-harms.*

Make sure you let the person you want to support know that you are there for them *if* they need you or want to talk.

Talking about self-harm with a person you care about can be upsetting and difficult for both of you. It might be useful for you to seek additional support to understand self-harm better and to enable you to be calm and less anxious.

Some organisations offer *parent-to parent support* such as PinPoint on <http://www.pinpoint-camb.org.uk/self-harm>

*Young people* can get help on <https://www.selfharm.co.uk/articles/helping-someone-who-self-harms>

A useful conversation with the person that self-harms might be around staying and keeping themselves safe.

You might feel scared about the person seriously injuring themselves or committing suicide – even if it is by accident.

It is important for you and them to notice when things are getting too much and where they can seek help. See information: [www.mind.org.uk](http://www.mind.org.uk) under ‘how to cope with suicidal feelings’

## How can I help myself?

If you are thinking of stopping or reducing self-harming you might find it difficult to know where to start

There are some things that you can try to help yourself initially, but you might need to try a few in order to find something that works for you.

- Keep a diary to record what happens before, during or after self-harm to understand what triggers the urge to self-harm
- Distract yourself
- Delay self-harm each time you feel the urge

You can find a list of how you can help yourself on [www.mind.org.uk](http://www.mind.org.uk) under the section self-harm.

If you find that self-help only is not working, it can be useful to talk to somebody about how you are feeling. This can help you to understand your self-harm better.

Asking for support can take a lot of courage and it is important to choose somebody you trust to talk to.

If you are talking to a professional remember that nobody should pressurise you into making decisions or promises.

## What support is available?

It is important to decide who would be a trusted person to talk to if you are reaching out for support. **You might feel able to talk to family members**, but this might feel uncomfortable.

**You can talk to your doctor**, particularly if you are scared or worried about your injuries. Your doctor might also be able to refer you to more specialist services.

**There are telephone and email helplines** you could contact anonymously:

### Samaritans

08457909090 or

email [jo@samaritans.org.uk](mailto:jo@samaritans.org.uk)

### ChildLine

0800 1111

**There are websites** that can be really useful:

<http://www.cpft.nhs.uk/GTRT/Self-harm.htm>

showing videos of self-harm experiences

<http://www.youngminds.org.uk> various

information on self-harm

**Centre33** offers confidential counselling. It might be useful to talk to a trained therapist who will work with you in a non-judgemental way.

Counselling is about helping you to work things out for yourself, making decisions and choices and helping you to look at things differently. It can help you to feel better about yourself and to understand your self-harm in a way that enables change.



## About Self Harm

**Free confidential mental health support and counselling for young people in Cambridgeshire**

(01223) 316488

[help@centre33.org.uk](mailto:help@centre33.org.uk)

[www.centre33.org.uk](http://www.centre33.org.uk)

If you are injuring your skin make sure that you keep your wounds clean and seek help from a doctor or nurse if you are in doubt.