

Let's Talk about Self-Harm



It can be difficult to talk about self-harm, and it's OK to be unsure about this. This guide has information about what self-harm is, how to talk about it and find ways to cope, and where to find the right support for you.



What is self-harm?

When someone hurts themselves on purpose, this is called 'self-harm'. This can include physically hurting ourselves, causing ourselves emotional harm, or deliberately putting ourselves in dangerous situations.

Self-harm can often be a way to cope when things feel overwhelming, and it is usually a sign that we are in need of support. If you, or someone you know, is struggling with self-harm, it's OK to feel this way! And remember:

We all go through difficult times in our lives, and we all cope in different ways. Sometimes it is assumed that self-harm is always a sign of suicidal behaviour, but anyone can be affected by self-harm.

A few reasons a person may self-harm are:

- Struggling with difficult thoughts or feelings
- Difficulties with family or friends
- Struggling with their self-esteem
- Being bullied or abused
- Experiencing stress (e.g. due to exams)

IT'S OK TO ASK FOR HELP!



Need urgent help?

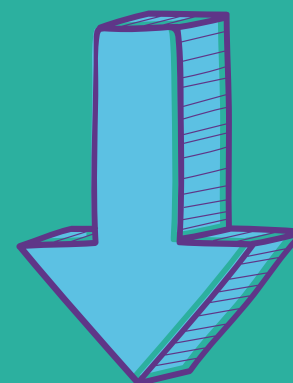
If you're struggling to cope, you are not alone. You can find free, non-judgemental, 24/7 support here:



SO... HOW DO WE TALK ABOUT IT?

⚡ TRIGGER WARNING ⚡

If you're feeling vulnerable, this section could be triggering for you. If so, it's OK to skip this bit and move onto the rest of this guide.



What can self-harm behaviours include?

A lot of people make assumptions about self-harm, however it can include lots of different things. It can include deliberately injuring yourself (such as by cutting, pinching, or scratching), excessive drinking or drug use, purposefully getting into fights, having unsafe sex, or putting yourself in dangerous situations.

REMEMBER: it's OK to not be OK!
We all cope with difficult feelings and situations in different ways, and it's OK to reach out for help.



If you are self-harming...

- "I'm finding (...) really hard right now."
- **"Can we have a chat about (...)?"**
- "I've been doing (...) to myself and I don't know why."
- **"Can I talk to you in private please?"**
- "I need some support but I'm not sure where to start."

If someone else is self-harming...

- "Is there anything I can do to help?"
- **"I've noticed you've not seemed yourself lately... is there anything you'd like to talk about?"**
- "I can see you've (...) and I'm worried about how you are."
- **"Do you have a safety plan/safe space?"**

Talking about self-harm can be difficult and may feel uncomfortable. If you're not sure how to talk about it, our conversation starters may be helpful. If you don't feel comfortable talking, that's OK! There's lots of ways that you could communicate your feelings.



If you don't want to speak to a family member or friend, you can reach out to a teacher, your GP, or another healthcare professional. You won't be told off or get in trouble - they are there to help and support YOU.

If you don't feel able to speak to your parent or carer, that's OK - you have a right to privacy even if you are under 16. If your GP or teacher needs to break confidentiality, they will talk to you about this first.



TIPS AND ADVICE

Keeping yourself safe

⚡ TRIGGER WARNING ⚡

While self-harm may be a way to help you cope, and it might feel too difficult to stop right now, it's important to keep yourself safe from further harm (e.g. infections). It can be helpful to have other coping strategies that provide relief when needed, but are safer than self-harm.

Some alternatives to self-harm are:

- Rubbing ice cubes on your skin
- Drawing or writing on the area you wanted to harm
- Having a cold shower or running cold water over your skin
- Screaming into a pillow or empty room
- Hitting a soft object (e.g. a cushion)
- Tearing something up (e.g. a magazine)
- Clenching your muscles then relaxing (repeat as needed)

What can help?

Practising self-care can help to build up 'positive coping strategies', and these can be useful for when we are struggling with difficult thoughts or feelings. If you are unsure where to start, here are some ideas to try!



- **Something fun** – listen to music, watch your favourite TV show, do a puzzle, or even pop some bubble wrap
- **Something creative** – do some drawing, create a painting, or perhaps something crafty
- **Something new** – try a new hobby or activity; fresh air can often help us to feel a bit brighter!
- **Something comforting** – get some sleep, wear comfy clothes, eat your favourite food, or allow yourself to cry. Remember – it's OK to not be OK!

Find support here:



My Safety Plan

No matter how often you are affected by self-harm, it can be helpful to have a Safety Plan to remind you of strategies that help you cope, and who/where you can go for support. We all cope in different ways, so you will know what works best for you!

I CAN TALK TO...

- **At home:**

- **At school/college/uni/work:**

- **At other places (e.g. my youth club):**

PLACES I FEEL SAFE ARE...

(e.g. a specific room at school or college)

SERVICES I CAN CONTACT ARE...

MY POSITIVE COPING STRATEGIES:

**My emergency
contacts are:**

