

SELF-HARM

Self-harm involves inflicting injuries or pain on one's own body and this can take many forms. The most common form of self-harm is probably cutting oneself. Self-harming can also take the form of a person burning, beating, picking at, biting, scratching their skin, using harmful substances, picking at their nails until they bleed, slapping oneself, drinking caustic substances etc.

Why do people self-harm?

- Helps them to deal with bad thoughts and feelings
- Surviving emotional distress
- Re-creating earlier experiences
- A means to communicate abuse
- To try and get people to listen
- Provide meaning to negative experiences Release of tension steaming from anxiety, grief or anger
- To relieve feeling of guilt or shame
- To gain control over one's life

Myths about self-harm

- Self-harm is a suicide attempt
- Self-harm is a form of attention-seeking
- A person who self-injures is a dangerous individual

If you want to help someone who self-harms:

- Show them your understanding and support
- Try to talk to them about their feelings and encourage them to speak about how their thoughts
- Encourage the person to seek help, you should only offer as much as you can cope with and don't try to take responsibility for stopping them from hurting themselves.

Self-help – How to deal with self-harm

It may be helpful to try and identify when, how and where you self-harm. Keep a diary about your feelings and what makes you feel like self-harming. If you know what happens to make you injure yourself, you can try to work out how to change things. Less damaging alternatives in causing pain are: • Having an elastic band around the wrist and snapping the skin with it • Using boxing gloves and punching a punch-bag Alternatives to help manage painful experiences: • Breathing deeply • Tell yourself out loud that you will be ok and the feelings are just memories from the past • Having a special item to hold or look at for comfort • Distract yourself with an activity you like doing • Chat to

family or friends • Write your feelings down Alternative ways to value your body: • Rub your arm or leg with your hand feeling the sensation when your skin touches your skin • Stamping your feet until you can feel them • Drinking a cup of tea or ice water and focus on the temperature changes in your mouth and stomach How else can you help yourself? Talking to other people is important, and can begin the process of healing. Talking about self-harm can be painful, so talk to someone who you can trust and who will be sensitive to what your feeling. For people who self-harm the main goal is to stop. Often the person might need to talk to a counsellor and work through their experiences. Sometime a person will require counselling at the same time as s/he is seeking alternatives to self-harm.