

Self-Harm Toolkit

Please look after yourself as you go through this guidance. This topic may be distressing. You may choose to go through it with a family or staff member at a time that is best for you. Sources of support are included on the last slide.

For further support or questions contact
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What is self-harm?

Self-harm is any intentional act of to harm oneself on purpose.

This can include:

- Cutting
- Burning
- Scratching / hairpulling
- Poisoning
- Punching walls or hitting self



Why do people self-harm?

Self-harm is a response to psychological distress or discomfort. There are lots of triggers that can cause a young person to hurt themselves.

It can be a way to express feelings, release emotional pain/stress, to stop feeling numb (by feeling pain) etc. Each person will have their own reasons which might be different from day-to-day.

MYTH: Self-harmers just want attention.

A lot of young people who self-harm feel a lot of shame about it and do it in secret. If a young person is asking for your attention there will be a reason so give them that care and attention.



Why do people self-harm?



This is the issue that needs to be addressed, the root cause of the behaviour.

Do not remove the coping mechanism if there is no healthy alternative. Support the student to gradually move over to less harmful coping methods.

How can talking to support staff help?

- First aid – Staff with a green lanyard can help with immediate first aid and advice.
- Reassurance – Staff can help to reassure you that this is a coping mechanism and can be replaced with healthier ways to manage life events and feelings. Sometimes it can be helpful to be reminded that you will not feel like this forever, things do move on.
- Guidance – Talking through ways to manage the urges to self-harm and what could replace the behaviour.
- Signposting - to websites and additional support, such as counselling.



Talking about self-harm

- Respond calmly and non-judgementally.
- Try not to ask too many 'why' questions. They may not be able to articulate why they do it.
- Be clear that this is a common coping behaviour but there are ways to change it.
- Don't tell them to 'just stop doing it'. This is unhelpful, unrealistic and will likely stop the person from getting further help.
- You may gently ask if there has been anything going on that makes them feel emotional or overwhelmed. Focusing on the root triggers and encouraging addressing them with a professional.
- Research* suggests most young people want:
 - TIME AND ATTENTION (Listening)
 - CARE AND RESPECT
 - PRIVACY
 - SUPPORT ACCESSING SERVICES

Managing self-harm

REMOVING TEMPTATION: Encourage removing any implements that could be used to hurt themselves from bags and bedrooms. Having to find implements delays the self-harm and the urge may subside.

DELAY: See how long you can wait when an urge first appears. Delaying the behaviour gives time for the urge to fade as emotions change.

DISTRACTION: e.g, texting friends, talking to family, drawing, knitting, exercise. Activities that take up mental space and focus are usually best.

MANAGING FEELINGS: Try processing the feelings: Talking to people/counsellor, writing poetry or fiction, journaling, drawing, singing, texting a support service, etc.

Self-harm and Covid19

Being confined to homes/bedrooms may increase the urge to self-harm and remove a lot of the coping mechanisms that might previously have been used.

If you know someone is struggling, ask how they are coping and talk about how they could adapt their coping mechanisms during the restrictions.

Try gently reminding them of services that offer text and messenger support that is more private.
(See last slide)

Resources

Support services:

Battle Scars (Leeds service)

Provide face-to-face, online support and resources.

www.battle-scars-self-harm.org.uk

Harmless (National Org)

Support and advice

<http://www.harmless.org.uk/whoWeSupport/youngPeople>

Self-harm UK

<https://www.selfharm.co.uk/>

Apps:

Stay Alive
(Suicidal thoughts)



Calm Harm
(Self-harm urges)

