

Let's Talk...Do you know a young person who self-harms?

This leaflet aims to help raise awareness about self-harm among family and friends. It explains what self-harm is and why young people might self-harm. It also describes key warning signs and how to talk about self-harm and to access support.



What is self-harm?

Self-harm is when someone causes harm or injury to themselves. People have described self-harm as a way to cope with overwhelming emotional feelings or thoughts and can make a young person feel like they are in control. Self-harm is not a suicide attempt or a cry for attention.

Self-harm can take lots of forms such as cutting, burning, bruising, head banging, scratching, poisoning, hair pulling, not eating and drinking and many more. Around one in twelve children and young people have said they have self-harmed.

Why might a person self-harm?

There are many different reasons why young people may harm themselves.

Some common reasons are:

- Being bullied
- Pressure to do well at school
- Physical, sexual or emotional abuse
- Grieving a loss
- Breakdown of a relationship

Warning signs

Here are some signs to look out for:

- Exercising excessively
- Spending more time in the bathroom
- Unexplained cuts or bruises, burns or other injuries
- Changes in mood
- Appearing depressed or unhappy
- Having experienced negative life events such as bereavement, abuse, exam stress, or parental divorce could have prompted these feelings
- Expressing feelings of hopelessness or failure
- Changes in eating or sleeping patterns
- Losing friendships
- Wear layers of clothes and try to hide injuries
- Withdrawal from activities

Coping with self-harm

There are other ways to cope with negative thoughts without self-harming.

1

To help release emotions

- Tearing something up into hundreds of pieces
- Punch a pillow or kick something soft
- Scream into a pillow
- Try pinching skin instead of cutting
- Flick a bobble or elastic band on your wrist
- Use a red pen to mark where you might want to hurt yourself
- Rubbing ice on your arm or hold ice cube in your hand until it melts and focus on how cold it feels

2

Managing injuries and minimise harm

- Clean and dress cuts, bruises or injury to avoid infection
- Avoid using drugs or alcohol
- Avoid cutting skin where you have lots of scars or deep cuts.
- Eat well and get plenty of rest

3

Understanding patterns of self-harm can help people to recognise what gives them the urge to self-harm.

Young people have said it is not helpful being told **'it will be ok'** because sometimes you can't see that.

Here are some tips

Distraction techniques can help to reduce and minimise harm:



Try relaxation and deep breathing exercises

breathe in 5 seconds, hold breath for 5 sec and slowly breathe out. Repeat again



Physical exercise

play a sport, go for a run, cycle or walk to the shops



Being creative

drawing, writing or painting



Watch a funny movie/TV show or listen to music



Visit a friend

Try the 5-4-3-2-1 distraction technique using your 5 senses to shift your focus

5 things you can **see**

4 things you can **hear**

3 things you can **touch**

2 things you can **smell**

1 thing you can **taste**

What can friends and family say?

Talking about self-harm

It can be difficult to know what to say and how best to approach the situation. Often people who self-harm may feel embarrassed and regret their actions.

Here are some tips to help start talking:

- Ask them how they are feeling
- Stay calm and be non-judgemental
- Offer to listen and be patient
- Keep an open mind
- Remind them of their positive qualities and things they do well
- Ask them what help they would like
- Offer to help them find support (see local support).

Support and resources

Support is available if you or someone you know self-harms or if anyone is affected by self-harm.

Local support	National support	Apps
At Home Parents/carers, brother/sister, friends or other trusted relative.	Childline - Young people under 19 years of age 0800 1111 www.childline.org.uk	DistrACTApp Free information and advice about self-harm and suicidal thoughts www.nhs.uk/apps-library/distract
In School School nurse, teacher or pastoral support	Papyrus Hopeline UK 0800 068 41 41 www.papyrus-uk.org	Calm Harm Free mental health App designed to help people resist or manage the urge to self-harm www.nhs.uk/apps-library/calm-harm
School Nursing Service Access number: 01922 423349 or schoolnursing@walsallhealthcare.nhs.uk	Calm - Support for young men aged 15+ in the UK 0800 58 58 58 www.thecalmzone.net/help/get-help	
Walsall Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub 0300 555 2866 (option 2)	The Mix - Support for young people aged 13-25 08 0808 808 4994 www.themix.org.uk/mental-health/self-harm	
Local GP surgery	Shout Text Service Text Shout to 85258 www.giveusashout.org	
Eating Disorder Service - Black Country Healthcare NHS Trust Contact your GP for referral. If in crisis call 111 or 999 or attend local A&E	YoungMinds 0808 802 5544 - Parents Helpline Text YM to 85258 - Crisis Messenger 24/7 www.youngminds.org.uk/find-help	
Black County Mental Health NHS Trust Crisis Service 0800 008 6516 (24 hours) www.blackcountryhealthcare.nhs.uk/contact-us/help-crisis	National Self-harm Network An online forum where you can chat with other people affected by self-harm. www.nshn.co.uk	
Black Country Emotional Support Helpline (16+) 0808 802 2288 www.rethink.org/help-in-your-area/services/advice-and-helplines/the-black-country-emotional-support-helpline	Self-Injury Support A national service that helps women and girls affected by self-harm. 0808 800 8088 or Text: 07537 432444 www.selfinjurysupport.org.uk	
Kooth - Online support for young people www.kooth.com	Recover Your Life An online forum run by and for people who self-harm. www.recoveryourlife.com	
Walsall Psychological Help (WPH) Counselling and Education Services 01922 649000 www.wphcounselling.org/Selfharm.htm	Family lives.org 0808 800 2222 www.familylives.org.uk/advice/teenagers/health-wellbeing/self-harm	