

Self-Harm

What to do if you are worried about self-harm. Information for young people.



What is Self-Harm?

Self-harm is where someone does something to deliberately hurt themselves when they find things difficult to cope with. It can include things like:

- Cutting
- Overdosing (self-poisoning)
- Hitting (self and others)
- Burning or scalding
- Picking or scratching skin
- Pulling hair
- Ingesting toxic substances (like bleach)
- Eating disorders

Who does it?

There is not one type of person who self-harms. It does not depend on sex, age, religion or background. Both sexes self-harm, but their methods may be different, for example males may engage in behaviours such as fighting. **Both adults and young people can self-harm.** LGBTQ young people, those who have been abused or witnessed Domestic Violence, have been in care/ adopted, identify as emo, been bullied or experienced parental substance misuse are potentially more at risk of self-harm or other mental health concerns.

Why do they do it?

People self-harm for a number of reasons. Something might have happened to make them feel bad about things. This could be stress or anxiety, friendship or relationship difficulties, isolation or loneliness, low self-esteem, questioning sexuality or gender.

But often there is no known cause or trigger.

Someone has told me they are hurting themselves; what should I do?

Do

- Offer your friend a kind smile or hug, and ask "what can I do to help?"
- Listen to your friend
- React calmly and be reassuring and supportive
- Let your friend know they aren't alone
- Encourage them to ask for help from an adult, and look up ideas for support and information online together
- Ensure they get medical attention if this is needed
- Make sure you find someone to talk to who can support you

Don't

- Be judgmental
- Be dismissive of their problems
- Tell them to stop
- Panic
- Feel it is your responsibility to make things better
- Promise to keep this a secret—if you feel your friend is unsafe, tell a trusted adult. This is to keep your friend safe so they can get the help they need

Social media & websites There are some really good websites that have information and advice about self-harm and coping strategies. But there are some sites and social media that can be dangerous. They can put people who self-harm, or those who are thinking about it, at risk. Only use safe sites, like those recommended in this leaflet. If a site makes you feel uncomfortable in any way, it's best to close it straight away.



Staying safe is an important message for someone who self-harms, so that the physical risks, such as infection, are reduced as much as possible.

This includes keeping wounds (and any tools used) clean. It is also essential to have access to a first aid kit - including antiseptic wipes and plasters.

Getting help - it's good to talk!

Although people who self-harm often find it difficult to tell others, **many say that they would like to get help and that talking about it would be a good starting point.**

The support of someone who understands and will listen can be very helpful in facing difficult feelings, and the reasons **behind them.**

At home you may be able to talk to parents or carers, or another trusted family member.

Sometimes talking to people at home can be difficult, but there are plenty of people to talk to who might be the first step towards getting help and support.

- **In school or college** A teacher/tutor, learning mentor, teaching assistant or other trusted adult. Some schools/colleges have

counselling or drop-in centres and school nurse drop-in sessions.

- **Outside school** Youth workers, sports coaches, Guides / Scouts leaders and church leaders can all be good people to talk to, to get help.
- **GP** Going to see a GP or practice nurse can be a really useful way of getting advice and support. You can prepare yourself for what to expect at an appointment by going to **www.docready.org**
- **Websites/helplines** If a person who is self-harming is reluctant to tell someone face-to-face, they can get help and advice from a helpline or website. See our list of safe contacts on the back of this leaflet.
- **Go to www.SavvyKernow.org.uk for a list of Young People Friendly services in Cornwall**

Coping strategies and distractions

Replacing self-harm with other, safer, coping strategies can be a positive way of dealing with difficult feelings. Different things work for different people, so you may need to try a few approaches to see what works for you. Helpful strategies when you want to self-harm can include:

- Hitting pillows, cushions or bean bags and having a good scream
- Going for a walk or run, or other kinds of exercise
- Snapping an elastic band on your wrist
- Watch your favourite TV show/funny videos online
- Crying is good
- Try to be around people until the urge or feeling passes
- Talking to someone you trust
- Avoid social media that makes you feel worse/bad about yourself
- Looking at supportive websites/message a helpline
- Read a good book
- Holding an ice cube against your skin instead of cutting
- Play video games
- Wrap your usual tool in a whole roll of sticky tape so that it's difficult to access

Support in Cornwall

www.kooth.com Free online support for young people in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly

www.mindyourway.co.uk Mental health and wellbeing services for young people in Cornwall

www.savvykernow.org.uk Friendly advice and services in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly

www.youthkernow.org.uk A website for young people in Cornwall including an A-Z of services

Apps

www.docready.org Docready helps you get ready for the first time you visit a doctor to discuss your mental health
www.thesite.org/apps-and-tools/

stressheads Stressheads is an app to help you deal with all kinds of stress
www.headspace.com meditation app for mindfulness techniques
www.inhand.org.uk a mental wellbeing app designed by young people for young people

National support websites

www.epicfriends.co.uk Advice on how to help friends who are struggling to cope emotionally

www.thesite.org Non-judgmental support, information, discussion boards and live chat

www.selfinjurysupport.org.uk Supports girls and women affected by self harm

www.youngminds.org.uk The voice for young people's mental health and wellbeing

www.childline.org.uk Advice, info and help online or by telephone 0800 1111

www.lifesigns.org.uk User-led information and support for people who self-harm

www.samaritans.org 08457 90 90 90 Telephone support for anyone who needs to talk

Get help now

In an emergency, dial 999. You can also call your GP out of hours service or go to A & E



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