

Are you, or is someone you care about, self-harming?

WARNING:

The aim of this leaflet is to provide support to people who are self-harming, their parents, carers, friends and colleagues. Therefore, some of the content may trigger feelings of distress.

What is self-harm?

Self-harm is often an attempt to manage difficult thoughts and feelings and can be a physical response to emotional pain. The action of self-harm can be to intentionally harm or injure yourself.

You may find this video helps to explain.

www.suffolkmind.org.uk/additional-help/understanding-self-harm/



After harming yourself, you may feel better able to cope with life again, at least for a short while. Although self-harm can be a way of coping, this might be short-lived, and it is important you are able to find healthier coping methods.

Self-harm is often stigmatised and misunderstood, and frequently people who self-harm try to keep their distress hidden.

Common forms of self-harm (not an exhaustive list):

- Injuring yourself by scratching, cutting, burning, picking your skin, picking old wounds or not allowing old wounds to heal
- Hitting yourself against objects, such as punching walls, banging your head or punching yourself
- Ligaturing
- Drug and/or alcohol misuse
- Swallowing substances or objects
- Irregular eating, such as restricting your food intake, eating so much food you feel sick, making yourself sick
- Putting yourself in dangerous or unsafe situations, or acting recklessly
- Taking dangerous risks with your health, for example not taking insulin correctly if you are a diabetic

If you have a serious injury, seek help immediately by calling 999 or attending A&E. If you have an open wound or injury you may need some medical advice from your GP surgery or local NHS walk-in centre so that it does not get worse.

What might I be feeling if I am at risk of self-harm?



These feelings can be very intense and noticing them early may help you to keep yourself safe.

How might I behave if I am at risk of self-harm?



If you are distressed and at risk of self-harming, then you are possibly experiencing some of the behaviours listed above.

Self-harm triggers

It can help to recognise triggers. Triggers are situations in your daily life that can create feelings of being overwhelmed and distressed.

Understanding what your triggers are will help you to plan to manage them and seek help when you need to.

Some triggers might be:

- Being reminded of traumatic or distressing memories
- Time of year
- Your past history
- Social media
- Work stress
- Relationships with family or friends
- Feeling that you are being judged
- Bullying
- Comments from others which you find hurtful, for example about weight, appearance, or lifestyle
- Not being listened to or heard
- Hormones or body changes
- Money and debt
- Physical illness and pain
- Mental illness
- School pressure/exams

When you are more at risk of self-harming, consider using a safety plan. There is one included in this leaflet which may help in staying safe. It is important to complete the safety plan when you are feeling calm.

Talking can help

There are no rules about who you should talk to about your self-harming, or how to do it.

You could speak to a friend, family member, or another person you trust and feel comfortable with.

Remember to give yourself time and space to have this conversation; it is up to you how much you tell somebody. If you struggle to find the words, then perhaps writing it down or sending a text message would help.

After this experience you may feel emotionally drained which is completely understandable.

Seeking help

There are many organisations who are ready to help and support you, whether you are someone who has previously self-harmed or has never done it before. There is also support for those who are caring for others who self-harm. See the resource list at the end of the booklet for more support.

Whether you sometimes think about self-harm, or you've already hurt yourself, Samaritans are there to listen. No pressure, no judgment. For every 10 calls answered, one is about self-harm and many people call Samaritans because they want to avoid harming themselves in that moment.

Call 116 123 www.samaritans.org/how-we-can-help/if-youre-having-difficult-time/if-you-want-self-harm/

Talking to someone at SHOUT about self-harm can help relieve difficult feelings and reduce the urge to hurt yourself. Text 85258 to start an anonymous, free conversation with a trained volunteer who will listen to and support you. They are available 24/7.

Safety planning

My Safety Plan

To stay safe....

If you are self-harming and don't feel able to stop right now, it is important to keep yourself safe. A safety plan is like an 'emotional wellbeing first-aid kit'. It includes different things that will help reduce the risk of self harming.

Some people may find it helpful to record themselves speaking their safety plan aloud or giving a copy to someone they trust.

When I need help, I will talk to (trusted person):

I will seek help from (professional):

My triggers are, e.g loud noises, watching scary films:

Personal message of hope to myself:

Please fill this in when you are feeling calm.

Select the box you like or choose your own idea.

Things I need to help me stay calm:

- | | |
|--------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Puzzles | <input type="checkbox"/> Bubbles/ balloons |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Music/radio | <input type="checkbox"/> Paper and pen / colouring in/ arts and crafts |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Face wash | <input type="checkbox"/> Tooth brush/hair brush |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sour sweets/chewing gum | <input type="checkbox"/> Diary |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hot drink/ cold water | <input type="checkbox"/> Pet |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Book | <input type="checkbox"/> Football /sports equipment |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pillow | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: <input type="text"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Stress toy, fidget toy | |

Things I can do:

- | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Walk | <input type="checkbox"/> Ask for help |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Exercise | <input type="checkbox"/> Phone someone |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Breathe | <input type="checkbox"/> Play a game |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Stretch | <input type="checkbox"/> Listen to music |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Watch tv | <input type="checkbox"/> Plan on how I can help others |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Play an instrument | <input type="checkbox"/> Others: <input type="text"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Go to a public place /go to a safe place | |

The list below covers a range of national and local resources which can help you stay safe, and hopefully help you gain more of an understanding of your self-harming thoughts and behaviours.

National resources	
Mind	Explains self-harm, including possible causes and how you can access treatment and support. Includes tips for helping yourself, and guidance for friends and family. www.mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/self-harm/about-self-harm 0300 123 3393
National Self Harm Network Forums	The aims of this forum are to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support individuals who self-harm to reduce emotional distress and improve their quality of life • Support and provide information for family and carers of individuals who self-harm • Raise awareness of the needs of people who self-harm, dispel myths and combat discrimination • Empower and enable those that self-harm to seek alternatives to self-harm and further help where appropriate www.nshn.co.uk
Papyrus	Self-harm has a function for every individual who self-harms and stopping is not always straightforward even when you want to. Whether you are someone who self-harms, or you care about someone who self-harms, the following information is intended to shed some light on, what can be, a highly-stigmatised and complex subject www.papyrus-uk.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/001159-PAPYRUS-Leaflet_Self-Harm.pdf
Rethink	This page looks at what self-harm is. And why you may self-harm. It could help if you are using self-harm to cope. Or you are thinking about self-harming. It explains what support you can get. And how to help yourself if you self-harm. There is also information for friends, carers and relatives. www.rethink.org/advice-and-information/about-mental-illness/learn-more-about-symptoms/self-harm
Harmless	Harmless works with anyone, of any age, who do or are at risk of self-harm. Some people that speak to us have been hurting themselves for many years as a manner of coping, whilst others will have had thoughts to harm themselves. What matters to us is the struggle that someone is experiencing and how we can help them to feel better and be safer. www.harmless.org.uk

National resources	
Lifesigns	LifeSIGNS is a self-harm guidance and support network who provide information about self-injury. Whilst we never tell anyone to 'stop', we do support people as and when they choose to make changes in their lives. www.lifesigns.org.uk

Local resources - Suffolk	
The Source	If you think your friend might be self-harming, there are ways you can support them. If you're using self-harm as a way to deal with your feelings, it's important that you talk to someone and seek help. The Source provides a list of services that can help. www.thesource.me.uk/health/self-harm
Suffolk Info Link	Self-harm in children and young people - information and advice for parents and carers
Suffolk Wellbeing Service	Wellbeing Suffolk provide a range of support for people with common mental health and emotional issues, such as low mood, depression or stress. We work with you to help you make the necessary changes to improve your wellbeing and quality of life. Our services are free and are available to people and for people of all ages. www.wellbeingnands.co.uk 0300 123 1503. First Response helpline: 0808 196 3494

Local resources - North East Essex	
Therapy For You	When you're experiencing mental health difficulties, you want to find help right away. We're committed to delivering professional support promptly, when and where it's needed. That's why we're helping to break down the barriers to accessing mental health support by exploring new technologies and new ways of delivering the help you need. www.therapyforyou.co.uk 01206 334001
Mid Essex Sanctuary	The Mid Essex Sanctuary is there to support anyone experiencing a mental health crisis including self-harm that does not require medical treatment. www.mnessexmind.org/mid-essex-sanctuary 01206 764600

