

## Self-Harm Leaflet

This is a leaflet to help provide a guide about what self-harm is and how to cope with the issues of self-harm your child is dealing with.



## What is Self-Harm?

Self-harm is behaviour done to deliberately cause injury.

More than 10% of adolescences admit to self-harming.

- Cutting
- Overdose
- Hitting
- Bruising
- Burning
- Hanging
- Suffocation
- taking too little medication

Those who self-harm are not necessarily suicidal, it is often used as a way to cope with emotional difficulties or stress.

## Is your child self-harming?

Signs that may indicate your child is self-harming include:

- Unexplained cuts, bruises or burns
- Keeping themselves covered more than usual
- Being more withdrawn or socially isolated
- Low mood, lack of interest in life or depression
- Expressing feelings of failure, uselessness, hopelessness or anger
- Blaming themselves for problems

## Why would they self-harm?

Self-harm can be for a number of reasons:

- Reducing emotional tension, frustration, anger or stress
- Providing a feeling of pain to distract from emotional pain
- An attempt to regain control of emotions
- Expressing emotions such as hurt, anger or frustration
- A form of escape
- A cry for help

- Punishing themselves
- To identify with a peer group
- A suicide attempt

## Supporting your Child

It's important not to react in a way that will impact your child negatively and cause them to hide their self-harm from you.

### Have a conversation

Ask if they're worrying about anything

Let them know you're not judging them

Show you're prepared to listen

If they don't want to talk, see if they'll write a note, email or text message

Ask if they'd rather speak to somebody else (e.g. GP, councillor or helpline)

If they're open, try to help them work out the feelings and situations that trigger their self-harm

Help them think through their problems

Encourage them to think about how things may change in the future

Take talk of suicide very seriously.

Don't let self-harm become the focus of your relationship

Let your child know their emotions are real and important

Reassure them they're not a failure

Explain you want to help but aren't sure how

Watch for signs of bullying or abuse that may be triggering the self-harm.

If your child is reluctant to get help or doesn't acknowledge the risks you can still receive advice from your GP.

somebody who will talk to them about self-harm and assess their mental well-being.  
Ask the staff if you are unsure if this has been done.

- Hit a pillow
- Listen to or create loud music

## Managing injuries from self-harm

### Overdoses

Get your child to an emergency department as soon as possible

Try to find out what they've taken and tell the emergency medical staff

If your child won't tell you, look around for empty pill bottles or blister packs

### Cuts and Wounds

Apply pressure to bleeding cuts using a bandage or towel

Clean the wound under running tap water and then apply a sterile adhesive dressing or plaster  
If the wound is infected, encourage your child to seek medical help

### Burns

Cool with cold water for 10-30 minutes then cover with cling film

Don't use ice, creams or greasy substances

### Scars

Look into commercial products that can help them fade

Scars can be covered buy makeup

Remind your child that most scars eventually fade

If your child goes to hospital for any reason related to self-harm they should be seen by

## Alternatives to self-harm

As self-harm is normally used to help deal with emotional stress there are a number of ways to help manage their feelings.

### Soothing/Stress Relief/Distraction:

- Go for a walk
- Create something
- Go to a public place
- Keep a Diary
- Stroke a pet
- Watch TV or a Movie
- Take a bath
- Get in touch with friends/relatives
- Write negative feelings

### Releasing Emotions:

- Hold an ice cube in your hand until it melts
- Snap an elastic band against your wrist
- Draw on your skin with a red pen
- Physical Exercise
- Use a punch bag

## When to Seek Further Help

If you notice problems such as anxiety or low mood or their self-harm or distress increases you should seek further help

### National Services

**NSPCC** [www.nspcc.org.uk](http://www.nspcc.org.uk)

**R U OK?** [www.ru-ok.org](http://www.ru-ok.org)

**National Self-Harm Network** [www.nshn.co.uk](http://www.nshn.co.uk)

**The Site** [www.thesite.org](http://www.thesite.org)

**Childline** 0800 1111 [www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)

**Life Signs** [www.lifesigns.org.uk](http://www.lifesigns.org.uk)

**Samaritans** 08457 90 90 90 [www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org)

**Young Minds** 0800 802 5544

020 7336 8445 [www.youngminds.co.uk](http://www.youngminds.co.uk)

**Papyrus** 0870 170 4000 [www.papyrus.org.uk](http://www.papyrus.org.uk)

### Family Support

**Parentline Plus** 0808 800 2222

020 7336 8445 [www.parentlineplus.org.uk](http://www.parentlineplus.org.uk)

**Family Lives** 0800 800 2222 [www.familylives.org.uk](http://www.familylives.org.uk)

### Local Services

**Kooth** [www.kooth.com](http://www.kooth.com)

**Harmless** [www.harmless.org.uk](http://www.harmless.org.uk)

**Your Local GP** who may refer your child to CAMHS

## Books

Stopping the Pain: A workbook for Teens Who Cut  
and Self Injure - by Lawrence Shapiro

Rainbow Journal

## Self Help Tools

Get Self help [www.getselfhelp.co.uk](http://www.getselfhelp.co.uk)

Mood Juice [www.moodjuice.scot.org.uk](http://www.moodjuice.scot.org.uk)