

Self-Harm

Self-harm is when you hurt yourself as a way of dealing with very difficult feelings, painful memories or overwhelming situations and experiences. Some people have described self-harm as a way to:

- express something that is hard to put into words
- turn invisible thoughts or feelings into something visible
- change emotional pain into physical pain
- reduce overwhelming emotional feelings or thoughts
- have a sense of being in control
- escape traumatic memories
- have something in life that they can rely on
- punish themselves for their feelings and experiences
- stop feeling numb, disconnected or dissociated
- create a reason to physically care for themselves
- express suicidal feelings and thoughts without taking their own life.

You may not know why you self-harm, but it can be a means of expressing feelings that you can't put into words or think clearly about. After self-harming, you may feel a short-term sense of release, but the cause of your distress is unlikely to have gone away. Self-harm can also bring up very difficult emotions and could make you feel worse.

Even though there are always reasons underneath someone hurting himself or herself, it is important to know that self-harm does carry risks. Once you have started to depend on self-harm, it can take a long time to stop.

Resources:

My Personal Crisis Plan

Working Through Self-Harm

Self-Harm (MIND)

Distraction Techniques and Alternative Coping Strategies

Self-harm – A guide for young people

<https://www.youngminds.org.uk/young-person/my-feelings/self-harm/>

The truth about self-harm

<https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/publications/truth-about-self-harm>

Where to get help for self-harm

<https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/feelings-symptoms-behaviours/behaviours/self-harm/getting-help/>