


Self-harm -supporting concerned  
parents & carers

What is self-harm?


This is when someone hurts themselves on purpose as a way of trying to manage distressing or overwhelming feelings and experiences.

SIGNS TO LOOK OUT FOR


cutting themselves  
scratching skin  
burning skin  
biting skin  
hitting themselves, or banging their head or another part of their body on a hard surface, pulling hair out from their head, eyebrows or eyelashes OR even shaving their heads if in distress,  
inserting objects into their own bodies



Reach out to your GP / school for support for both you and your child. This takes courage and agreement with your child. As distressing as this is, try your best to let your child know you are there to help. No blame, no shame .....for anyone .

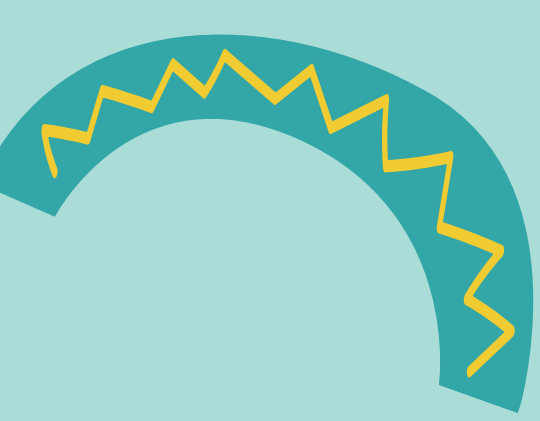


Someone who is self-harming might be dealing with lots of intense thoughts and feelings, and hurting themselves may feel like the only way to cope. Or they might feel numb and hurt themselves in order to feel something.



If you suspect your child may be self-harming it can be very upsetting and frightening but try to speak to them about your concerns showing you are there to try to understand and to help in any way you can .

We are in your corner here at Parentline, to listen, support or advise. Please contact us Monday to Thursday 9am to 9pm, Friday 9am to 5pm or Saturdays 9am to 1pm



## Self-harm, supporting concerned parents & carers

Easier said than done, but try supporting your child with their feelings. Over the longer-term, becoming more aware of how they feel when they self-harm, what's making them feel this way and what kinds of things help, will empower your child and you to feel more in control. This will hopefully reduce the sense of being overwhelmed for both of you and the feeling that they need to self-harm.

Keep an eye on your child without making them feel policed. It's completely natural that when you find out your child is self-harming, you may want to watch over them or know what they're doing all the time. While it's a good idea to monitor the situation and check in with them, sensing that they're being watched may increase their feelings of anxiety and guilt. When it feels possible and they need it, give them some space.

AS shocked as you may be, TRY to stay calm and non-judgemental. They need you now !

When your child does open up, try to focus on listening, showing empathy and being curious about what it's like for them, rather than trying to 'fix' things straightaway.

Sometimes they will just want you to listen and understand how they are feeling.



If your child is struggling to talk, they might find it easier to text you or write you a letter. This also gives you time to process what they've told you and think about how you'd like to respond.

## Self-harm, supporting concerned parents / carers

### Strategies for self-soothing

Writing down how they're feeling in a journal

Writing down difficult feelings on pieces of paper and then ripping them up

Ripping up a magazine or newspaper

Hitting a soft cushion, pillow or bean bag

Listening to loud music

Having a shower

Doing some exercise

Going for a walk outside, or taking the dog for a walk.

Focusing on breathing – how it feels in their body to breathe.

Wrapping up in a blanket or duvet

Talking to someone – a friend, family member or calling a helpline

Tidying or organising something

Doing a hobby they enjoy that helps them feel calm, such as painting, drawing, colouring-in, watching a favourite TV programme, playing video games, cooking or baking.

Placing a bag of frozen food on the place they may Self Harm.

### Some useful websites

<https://www.zestni.org/services/ship/>

<https://www.mindingyourhead.info/topics/self-harm>

<https://www.youngminds.org.uk/parent/parents-a-z-mental-health-guide/self-harm/>

<https://www.mind.org.uk/for-young-people/feelings-and-experiences/coping-with-self-harm/>

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/childrens-mental-health/self-harm/>

<https://www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/your-feelings/self-harm/self-harm/>

Papyrus UK

[https://www.papyrus-uk.org > contact-us](https://www.papyrus-uk.org/contact-us)

A confidential support and advice service for anyone aged under 35 who are experiencing thoughts of suicide | Call HOPELINE247 0800 068 41 41.

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