

What is self-harm?

Self-harm is when you hurt yourself deliberately. It may be used to deal with difficult feelings, painful memories or situations and experiences that affect you.

Any difficult experience can cause someone to self-harm. Below are just **some** of the reasons:

- pressures at school
- bullying
- parents divorcing/separating
- worries about money
- death
- racism
- homophobia, biphobia and transphobia
- breakdown of a friendship or a romantic relationship
- an illness, condition or health problem
- low mood, anxiety or anger towards something/someone

Sometimes, the reasons seem less clear and can be hard to make sense of. It can also be upsetting when you think that self-harm is the only way you can cope. If you don't understand the reasons for self-harm, you are not alone and can still get support to find healthier coping strategies.

Understanding patterns of self-harm

'**Triggers**' are what give you urges to harm yourself. They can be in the form of people, situations, anniversaries, sensations, specific thoughts or feelings.

Urges can include sensations like:



- heart racing
- sadness or anger
- a disconnection from yourself or a loss of feeling (numbness)
- repetitive thoughts about harming yourself, or how you might harm yourself
- unhealthy decision making, like working too hard to avoid feelings

Recognising your urges helps you take steps towards reducing or stopping self-harm. You could try writing down on paper or on your phone, what you notice about them, to help spot what happened just before you self-harmed.



Did you think about anything in particular?

Were you reminded of something difficult? Perhaps by a situation,
person or object?



Self-harm is a form of communication in instances where you might find it challenging to put into words how you feel and resort to harming yourself. It is important that adults around you help you communicate that distress in more helpful ways and find coping strategies to manage those feelings.

Some examples include:

- tearing up pieces of paper
- listening to music
- telling someone about how you feel
- flicking elastic bands on your wrists
- writing songs or poetry, drawing or singing
- physical exercise (for e.g. running, dancing)
- hitting cushions
- rubbing/holding an ice cube
- drawing on yourself with a sharpie
- practicing breathing - breathe in, then breathe out slowly. Repeat until you feel more relaxed.



Getting Support

Reaching out is not easy, especially if you feel worried that people may judge you or that they won't understand. You may even feel that other people might not want to help. Remind yourself that everyone needs support at different times and that it is **OK** to ask for help.

When you feel able to reach out for support, choose someone you trust to talk to about how you are feeling. This could be a friend, family member, teacher, mentor or safe person at school, school psychologist, GP, or another professional you may work with, such as a social worker, CAMHS support, etc.

Some useful websites and apps

Young Minds Crisis Messenger

Provides free, **24/7** text support for young people experiencing mental health difficulties.

All texts are answered by trained volunteers, with support from experienced clinical supervisors.

Texts are free from EE, O2, Vodafone, 3, Virgin Mobile, BT Mobile, GiffGaff, Tesco Mobile and Telecom Plus.

Texts can be anonymous, but if the volunteer believes you are at immediate risk of harm, they may pass your details on to who can provide support.

Text: YM to 85258

YoungMinds

For further information on self-harm, check out the YoungMinds website.

<https://youngminds.org.uk/find-help/feelings-and-symptoms/self-harm/>

NHS

This NHS website gives more information on how and where you can access support.

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/self-harm/>

Calm Harm

A free app providing support and strategies to help resist or manage the urge to self-harm.

The Mix

Offers support to anyone under 25 about anything that's troubling them.

Phone: 0808 808 4994 Opening times: 4pm - 11pm, seven days a week