



Self-harm

What you need to know

Hello, firstly I would like to say that having this kit is a really important step in your recovery. I have been where you are before, and I would love to say, it absolutely does get better and I'm sitting here being over a year self-harm free.

I started self-harming when I was 14, and I wish somebody told me to open up and speak to someone about my self-harm. It's a very difficult subject to talk about, but with the right support and the right techniques, you will get the help you may need, but ^{even} if that doesn't work, don't be afraid to keep trying new things. I found what works for me and you will too!

I just want you to know, it doesn't matter how long it takes to get there... you WILL get there!

Sometimes after you've self-harmed, you might experience feelings of guilt, hate, worry and wonders of "why have I done this?", so it is very important to make sure that you do something nice for yourself afterwards and clean your wounds.

If you feel like you need help with your wounds, please tell someone! Don't ever be scared or feel ashamed to ask for help because there are amazing people out there who will give you the most amazing advice and support.

If you can, before you self-harm, please talk about it with someone ~~first~~ you trust first, but if you don't want to, then that's okay too, at least inform someone you trust that you're having those thoughts or that you have self-harmed.

I remember a time I was having those thoughts, so I did something I enjoy, which is playing guitar, and you know what? I didn't even realise that them thoughts had passed, and for me, that was huge achievement!

You can also make them achievements.

Here are a few examples which helped distract me :-

Colouring, going for walks along the shore, spending time with animals, speaking to my family/friends, learning something new and listening to music (I found it helps make my thoughts less loud).

Right now, it might not feel like things will get better, but they will.

I believe in you, and you should believe in you, too. Millie

Introduction

This booklet is full of information for people who self-harm. We know that reaching out is a big first step, and we are so glad you have begun to look for help.

This pack is for you to use however you want - you might find it useful to keep all the contents in this pack in the envelope, or you might want to keep some of the distraction supplies in your pocket, or bag. You can design your own safety plan for what to do when you feel the urge to self-harm, or pull out the centre pages in this booklet and keep them close at hand.

There's also contact details for people who can help, a card to use when seeking treatment, and some distraction items that you might want to keep with you.

This pack is just the start of your road to recovery. It's designed for you, but you can use it however you wish.

What is self-harm?

Self-harm is when you hurt yourself on purpose. Examples include cutting, burning, poisoning and bruising, but other forms might be more indirect such as self-neglect, excessive risk taking, sexual promiscuity, self-trolling, alcohol and substance misuse, or eating distress.

Lots of people self-harm, we know it's not a positive way of dealing with things. But we know it is really difficult to stop, so please be kind to yourself. You have reached out for help, and that's a good place to begin.

Many people stop hurting themselves when the time is right for them. Everyone is different - try not to feel guilty - it is a way of getting through, and doing it now does NOT mean that you will have to do it forever.



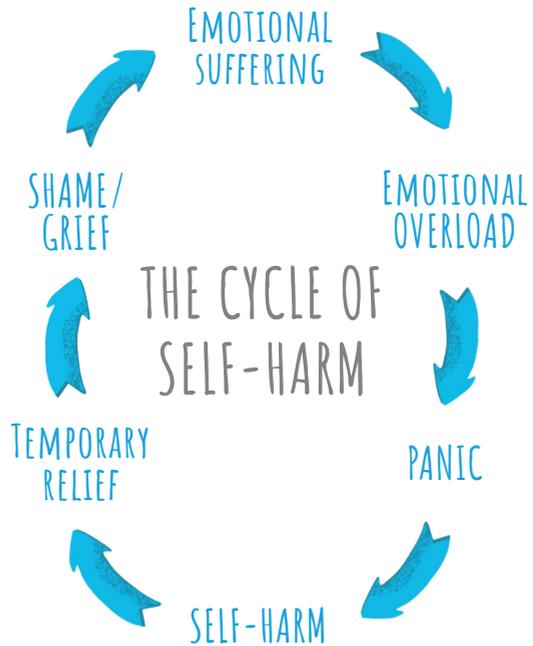
Why do people self-harm?

There is no single reason why people self-harm and it can affect anyone of any age. It can be a way of:

- Relieving overwhelming thoughts
- Reducing tension and stress
- Expressing emotions such as hurt, anger or frustration
- Regaining control over feelings or problems

Self-harm may be a way of coping with situations such as:

- Friendship or school problems, bullying, social media pressure, peer pressure, rejection
- Anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, poor body image, gender identity, sexuality, abuse
- Family problems such as separation or conflict, unrealistic expectations and bereavement.



Sometimes you might not know why you hurt yourself. There might not be obvious reasons, and that's OK, you can still get help.



Learn to recognise triggers

Triggers are what create the urge to hurt yourself. They usually involve some form of emotional suffering and can be situations, people, anniversaries or particular thoughts or feelings.

The urge to self-harm

Triggers can lead to emotional overload and create urges to self-harm. Taking alcohol or drugs can magnify urges and increase the likelihood of self-harming, so avoid them if you can.

Urges might include:

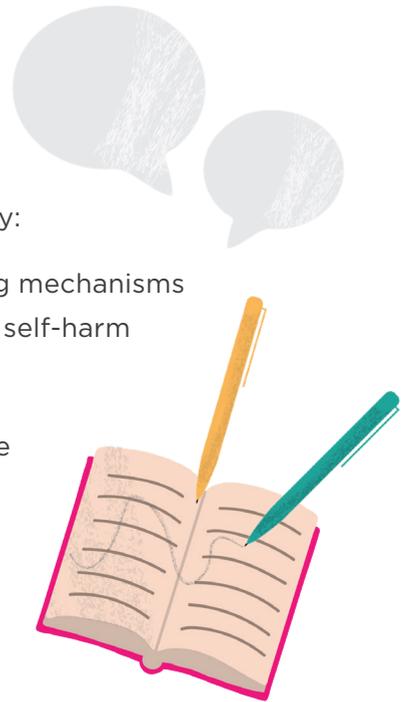
- Physical sensations like a racing heart or feelings of heaviness
- A disconnection from yourself or a loss of sensation
- Repetitive thoughts about harming yourself, or how you might harm yourself
- Unhealthy decisions, like working too hard to avoid feelings
- Strong emotions like sadness or anger.

Don't be too hard on yourself. Recovery can be a bumpy journey, and you may have many ups and downs, that's normal. Be nice to yourself, it's OK, it will be worth it.

What can I do?

Understanding and taking control of your self-harm can be challenging. You can help by:

- Develop distraction techniques and coping mechanisms
- Keep a diary and look for patterns in your self-harm
- Think about why you might self-harm and how it helps you cope
- Reach out to someone you trust, a helpline or other forum to talk things through
- Seek professional support
- Care for your injuries with first aid and access medical attention when needed.



Look after yourself

If you are going to harm yourself:

Ensure you know basic first aid. **LifeSIGNS** website has information specifically on first aid for self-harm.



- Avoid using medicines as a way of self-harming. Remember there is no such thing as a safe overdose.
If you have taken an overdose you should always seek medical advice.
- Make sure your tetanus vaccination is up to date.
- Avoid alcohol and drugs. They can make you more likely to act impulsively or harm yourself more than you intended.
- Know where to get help if you need it. If in any doubt ring NHS Direct on 111.
- **In an emergency ring 999 or go to A&E.** Do not be afraid to do this – you will receive the help and support you need. Use the self-harm report card if you don't feel comfortable talking about your injuries in reception.

First Aid



First aid for wounds

1. Apply gentle pressure with a clean cloth or gauze until the bleeding stops.
2. If the person feels faint, lay them down with their legs raised whilst you treat the wound.
3. Clean the wound with clean running water, gently washing it with soap. Dry it with a clean tea towel or face cloth.
4. Cover the wound once cleaned and dried with a sterile bandage to keep it clean and protected.
5. Watch for signs of infection, such as redness, swelling, warmth, or pus. It's important to keep the wound clean, so change the dressing if it gets wet, or dirty.

When to visit A&E:

- If the wound is deep, or continues to bleed through the dressing;
- If the wound becomes infected.

Call 999 if:

- The wound is deep and/or large and bleeding heavily;
- The person loses consciousness or shows signs of shock, such as paleness, rapid breathing, or a weak pulse;
- The person is having difficulty breathing or experiencing chest pain;
- The person has ingested harmful substances or has taken an overdose;
- The person has a temperature, feels unwell, is drowsy or confused and has an infected wound;
- The person has tried to take their own life.

First aid for burns

1. Hold the burn under cool running water for 20 minutes to reduce pain and swelling.
2. Once the burn is cooled, cover it with a dressing to protect it from infection.
3. If blisters form, don't burst the blisters; cover them with a dressing to protect the fragile skin.

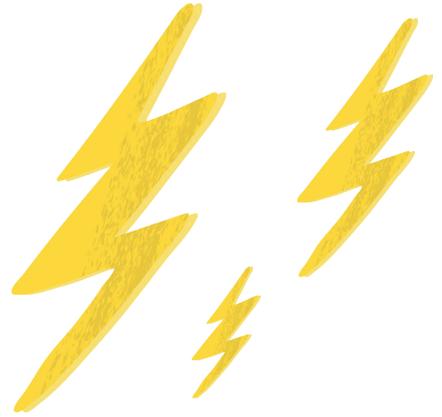
When to visit A&E:

- If the burn is blistered and larger than the palm of the hand;
- If the burn is deep, and looks waxy and white, or charred;
- If the burn affects a sensitive area of the body, such as the face, hands, feet, or genitals.
- If there is signs of infection, such as redness, swelling, warmth, or pus.

Thoughts of suicide

Although the majority of people use self-harm as a way of dealing with life - not as a way of wanting to end their own life - people who have self-harmed are at more risk of taking their own life.

Many people will have thoughts of suicide, and they can feel really scary - but the vast majority don't go on to take these thoughts any further.



If you are having thoughts of suicide - please reach out and talk - there is help and support available.



Where can I get help?

There are people you can talk to about what you are going through. It's important to talk to someone that you trust, that might include:

- Your parents
- Your partner
- A friend or colleague
- Wider family member
- A teacher or Youth Worker
- Your GP, who can refer you to CAMHS, and tell you about other sources of local support
- Helplines and online support forums, if you prefer talking over the phone (more details in the booklet)
- The Samaritans 116123



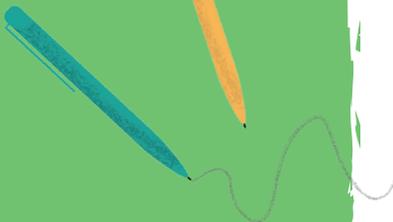
There is hope.

Safe plan

Create your own safe plan here. Pull out this section and keep with you, or use it as a template to make your own.

My triggers

Triggers are what creates the urge to hurt yourself. They usually involve some form of strong emotions and can be situations, people, anniversaries or particular thoughts or feelings. If you don't know what these are right now that's OK, keeping a diary can help you figure out what they may be.



My urges

Recognising your urges will help you spot them more quickly when they come on, and help you to take steps to reduce or stop your self-harming. E.g. physical sensations, strong emotions, repetitive thoughts, feeling disconnected, etc.



Safe plan

Keep a diary

One way to help yourself understand more about your self-harming behaviours is to keep a diary over a month or two. Include what happened before, during and after you self-harmed. This may help you to see patterns.

Writing a self-harm diary can be an upsetting thing to do, so be kind to yourself each time you do an entry, or get some support from a trusted person to help you write or review it.

What was happening before you got the urge to self-harm? What were your triggers?

This could be about situations, people, or particular thoughts or feelings.

What urges did you experience? *E.g. physical sensations, strong emotions, repetitive thoughts or feeling disconnected.*

How strong was the urge? Low Medium High

What distractions did you try?

How well did they work? Not at all Delayed me for a while Worked well

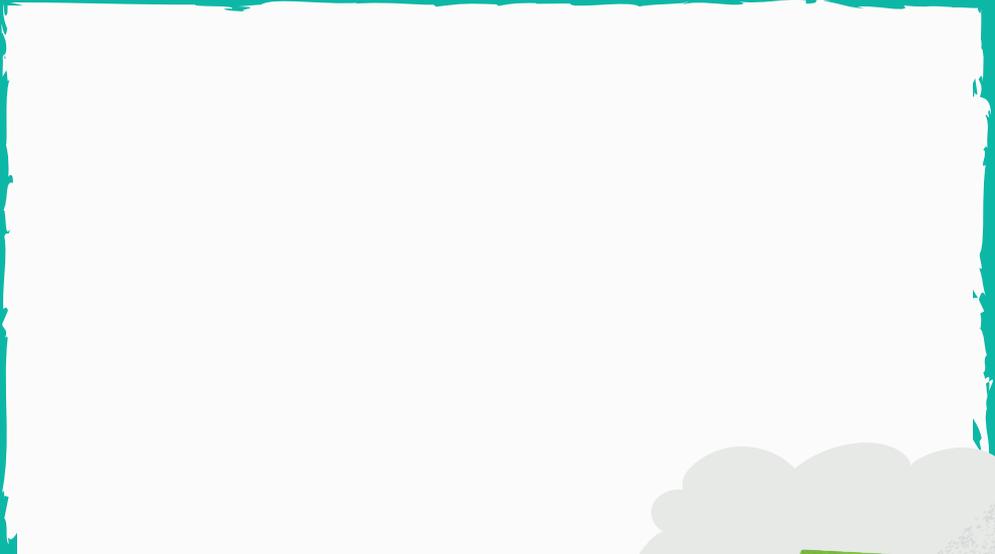
How did you harm yourself?

How severe was the harm? Slight Moderate Severe

How did you feel afterwards?

My hopes

What is it that keeps you going and gives you hope? Think about the people, places or things you have to cherish or look forward to.



Remember: be kind to yourself!

Many people stop hurting themselves when the time is right. Everyone is different, so try not to feel guilty about it. It's a way of surviving right now, and it does NOT mean that you will have to do it forever.



My Supporters

Write down who you can talk to or get help from when you're having a tough time. Can you talk to them about your self-harming?



How I deal with stress

Stress is a big trigger. When a lot of problems come together, it can often feel overwhelming so it's important to learn how to deal with it. Try writing down some stress busting activities that you know work for you. E.g. talking to someone, meditation, mindfulness, exercise or sport, walking or music – there's something for everyone.



My distractions

The urge to self-harm is strongest for up to 15 minutes. Begin to identify different ways you can distract yourself from the urge, or at least delay self-harming. Remember, some work better than others at particular times.



Distractions are unique, what works for you won't work for everyone, so try out different things.

Support at a glance

24/7 Support

Samaritans 116 123

Childline 0800 1111

Shout Text SHOUT to 85258

Papyrus 0800 068 4141

Useful websites

selfharm.co.uk

selfinjurysupport.org.uk

lifesigns.org.uk

youngminds.org.uk

themix.org.uk

Recommended Apps



Red Cross First Aid



Calm Harm



DistrACT



TellMi



Stay Alive



NHS Crisis lines

The NHS Crisis Line is there for anyone, whatever age you are. If you are in crisis, they will help.



Distractions

You can learn to manage the urge to self-harm through distractions. The urge will pass, and it's strongest for a 5-15 minute period – do what you can to get through this time.

When it comes to distractions, experiment and find out what works best for you. Have a look at the Calm Harm and DistrACT apps for more ideas.



My counsellor came up with the idea of drawing around my own feet on a piece of card and when I felt like I needed to self-harm, I would step onto the feet and it would make me feel like I was standing in someone else's shoes for a while so I didn't have to deal with how I was feeling or what I was thinking.

Kirsty x

Time with others

- Spend time with friends or family
- Talk to a trusted friend
- Ring a helpline
- Spend time on a supportive online forum

What emotions are associated with your self-harm?

For sadness try comforting yourself, for anger try something physical like hitting a pillow, if you are feeling out of control try being productive.



Being productive

- Write a to do list
- Tidy your bedroom
- Clean the house
- Do the dishes
- Bake a cake
- Untangle necklaces or string
- Write a list of positive things in your life
- Write an A to Z of distractions that you could try
- Paint your nails
- Pluck your eyebrows



Get physical

- Go for a run
- Do a workout
- Dance
- Have a pillow fight with the wall
- Play with a stress ball
- Pop bubble wrap
- Rip up paper into small pieces



Fill a box with items that help you avoid the urge to self-harm. Things you can touch, smell, look at, cuddle, listen to or watch, fiddle with or break into pieces.



If this has been helpful, we'd love your feedback!



Lose yourself

- Watch your favourite film or box set
- Play a game on your phone
- Do a crossword, word search or Sudoku
- Play with a fidget or slinky
- Dress up, glamorous or silly
- Plan an imaginary party
- Count tiles on the floor, bricks on a wall, books on a shelf



Find comfort

- Cuddle a soft toy/pillow
- Allow yourself to cry
- Sleep
- Have a hot bath
- Massage your hands
- Cuddle a pet
- Put your PJs on



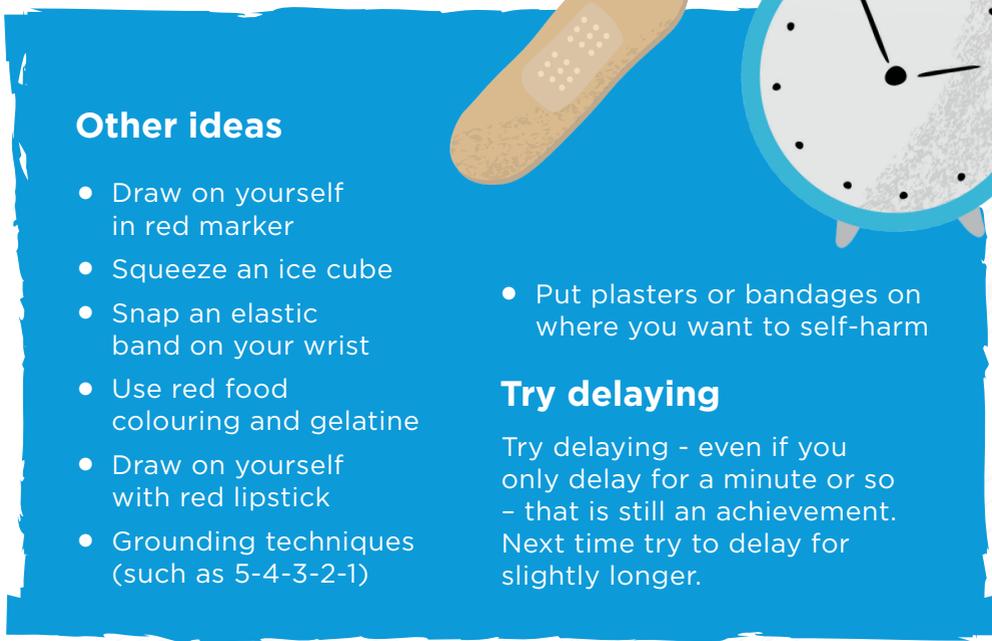
Be creative

- Draw or colour
- Play an instrument or sing
- Paint a picture
- Make a playlist
- Write a poem or blog



It's OK to feel emotions, It's OK to cry. Everyone has different way of coping with things, How you're feeling now will pass.

Kirsty X



Other ideas

- Draw on yourself in red marker
- Squeeze an ice cube
- Snap an elastic band on your wrist
- Use red food colouring and gelatine
- Draw on yourself with red lipstick
- Grounding techniques (such as 5-4-3-2-1)

- Put plasters or bandages on where you want to self-harm

Try delaying

Try delaying - even if you only delay for a minute or so - that is still an achievement. Next time try to delay for slightly longer.

Where to get more help

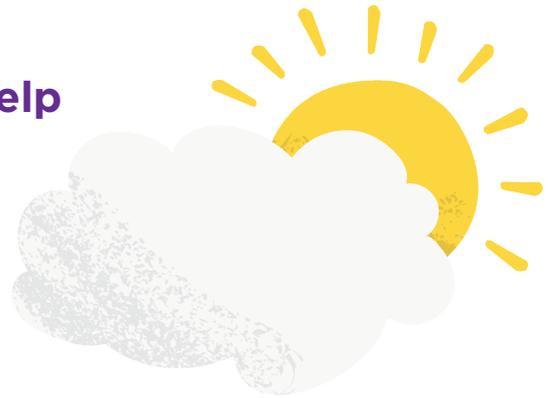
24/7 Support

Shout Text SHOUT to 85258

Samaritans 116 123

Childline 0800 1111

Papyrus 0800 068 4141



Online Support

Side by Side sidebyside.mind.org.uk
Mind's online community.

Kooth kooth.com Online support including one to one, discussion and information. (Not available in all locations).

Togetherall.com Together All is a safe, anonymous online community accessible 24/7 with trained professionals available at all times.

Local Support

Your GP, school or other support organisation can make a referral to local support, or Child and Adolescent NHS Mental Health Services. Self-referral is available in some areas.

Resources and Apps

CAMHS Resources camhs-resources.co.uk has a wealth of info about childrens' mental health and resources.

Stem4 Apps and information to support young people and parents stem4.org.uk.

DistrACT A thorough app covering distraction techniques, self-help, and where to get help.

Calm Harm Free app to help you manage the urge to self-harm.

First Aid Download the Red Cross First Aid App.

Tell Mi Peer support via the app, pre-moderated by professionals.

For more information about self-harm, scan to see our website



NHS Self-help guides



National Support, Advice and Information

Beat Eating Disorders beateatingdisorders.org.uk Information, advice, helpline and online support groups.

Harmless harmless.org.uk Information and support includes the Tomorrow Project.

SANEline sane.org.uk Out-of-hours mental health helpline including family, friends and carers. Support for 16+. 4pm-10pm on 0300 304 7000.

LifeSigns lifesigns.org.uk Practical and real life Information, guidance and online support.

The Mix 0808 8084994 (4pm-11pm Mon-Sat) themix.org.uk Advice and support for under 25s on many issues including self-harm.

Papyrus 0800 068 4141 24/7 papyrus-uk.org Support for young people with thoughts of suicide.

Recover Your Life recoveryourlife.com Online support community including the Butterfly Project.

Alumina selfharm.co.uk Information, and a weekly online course for young people 11-19, running over 6 weeks.

Young Minds youngminds.org.uk Thorough and practical information and advice about young people's mental health includes information on medication and parent's helpline.

Ideas for Distractions

Wellbeing and Coping wellbeingandcoping.net

Mind mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/self-harm/

The Mix themix.or.uk/mental-health/self-harm/self-harm-coping-tips-and-distractions

Information and support for Parents and Carers

Young Minds Parents Helpline 0808 802 5544. Advice to parents and carers Monday to Friday 9.30-4.00pm.

Anna Freud Centre annafreud.org/on-my-mind/ Information & resources on how you talk to your child about mental health/self-harm.

MindEd minded.org.uk Free online courses for parents and carers on mental health issues.



Every life matters ...

www.every-life-matters.org.uk

Suicide Safer Communities, Training and
Suicide Bereavement Support in Cumbria
Charity No. 1180815



*If this has been
helpful, we'd love
your feedback!*

