

Support

Harmless provide short and long-term face to face therapy, Skype therapy, regular drop in sessions, and email or postal support for individuals who self harm, their friends, families and professionals. It is important that everyone gets the right support at the right time.

Information

We produce a number of leaflets and resources about self harm, challenging stigma, and helping people move towards a better quality of life. All our resources, including a DVD, Workbook and Policy Guidance, are available from our online shop. (www.harmless.org/store)

The Academy at Harmless

We provide a range of both bespoke and standardised accredited courses across the UK. Training is levelled and therefore suitable for anyone who supports or works with individuals who self harm. Courses are both research led, and evidence based with service user informed insight to enhance the learning experience. Our aim is to equip everyone with the confidence and skill to be able to respond and support someone in distress. Speak to the team today training@harmless.org.uk

Consultancy

We offer a consultancy service to advise and inform services about self harm to provide better awareness, understanding, policy and service delivery.

www.harmless.org.uk

Self harm does not discriminate on the basis of gender, race, age, religion, disability or sexual orientation.

Neither do we.



www.harmless.org.uk
info@harmless.org.uk
0115 880 0280

Harmless CIC
1 Beech Avenue
Nottingham NG7 7LJ



HarmlessUK



HarmlessUK



Harmless_UK



Self Harm
Information for
Families & Friends

What is self harm?

Self harm is the term used to describe when someone intentionally hurts themselves physically as a way of managing distressing emotions. They may do this in a number of ways including:

- Cutting or scratching
- Burning with a flame or something hot
- Causing bruising to the body
- Taking overdoses of tablets or medication
- Inserting objects into the body
- Hair pulling (also known as trichotillomania)

This is by no means an exhaustive list.

Why do people self harm?

Self harm is a coping strategy that helps people to manage their emotional hurt or stress. It is important to remember that it is not attempted suicide; it is a coping strategy that people use in order to survive in the absence of having another effective way of managing their distress. Often people self harm to try and feel as if they have more control over their emotions, or to get immediate relief from high levels of distress. Sometimes people harm themselves because of self hate, or because they want to punish themselves.

Who self harms?

There is no straightforward answer to this. The truth is anyone could be at risk of self harming at some point in their life depending on the experiences they have and the way they feel about those experiences. People self harm for a variety of reasons and in a variety of ways, and what can cause one person to harm themselves may not create the same level of distress in another person.

What causes people to self harm?

Many things that can cause distress to someone could, in turn, lead them to harm themselves. Such issues that may trigger the onset or a period of self harm might be bullying, trauma, abuse, school or work pressures, bereavement and difficult relationships, but no experience can be disregarded. There doesn't always need to be a triggering event in someone's life that makes them turn to self harm – sometimes individuals just experience a period of decreased self-esteem or increased distress that leads them to harm themselves.

Self harm is NOT...

- Attention seeking or manipulative
- A mental illness – it is a symptom of internal stress or distress
- Exclusively a young person's problem
- A suicide attempt (but it is about staying alive)
- The problem, but it would suggest that the person is struggling with something else
- Something that necessarily stays with someone forever, given the right help and support

People self harm to provide respite from their emotions, not for the physical pain of the harm itself. People who self harm are not a danger to others. The severity of self harm is not directly related to the level of distress that the individual is feeling. The fact that someone has harmed themselves is what is significant, not what they did or how severe their harm was.

Please remember that support is available, and recovery is possible. Being a family member or friend of someone who harms themselves can be difficult – you deserve care and support too.

How can I help someone who self harms?

The main piece of advice that we give carers / supporters of people who self harm is that they **MUST** make time for themselves. At times, supporting someone who self harms does take a lot of strength and it is important to recognise your own needs, so that you have resources left for yourself and to enable you to continue to support the individual.

The main thing to understand is that self harm is not about the person harming themselves – it is about the internal pain they are experiencing that causes them to self harm. Self harm is a reaction to distress and a form of expression – the best way to help someone who is harming themselves is to help them deal with the issues that are driving the harm. Try not to focus on the self harm but on the distress, and help them try to identify the driving forces behind their harming and the feelings that they are experiencing.

Remember that the individual you are supporting is in distress and their actions are not intended to make you suffer. Try to imagine how desperate you would have to be feeling to cause actual physical harm to yourself.

Many people who self harm often feel ashamed and isolated by their difficulties. The best source of support you can give is to reduce this shame and isolation by providing an unconditional relationship. Allow the person to express their feelings whatever these may be as this might be fundamental to their recovery.

The language that we use...

It is advisable not to describe the person who self harms as a 'self harmer', as this defines the individual only in terms of their self harm, and leaves little space for other areas of their personality to be described or explored.