



### Support for self harm

Services like Harmless can offer you support and information about self harm and the experiences that have led you to this place. This might be a good place to start if you are worried about getting help for your self harm or wondering who to turn to. If you want to talk through your options regarding getting help, or want to get one-to-one specialist support from people who understand self harm, then don't hesitate to contact us.

Try to remember that self harm does not have to be forever. It may feel as if self harm is always going to be there – or it might even feel frightening to think about moving forward in life without it – but everyone at Harmless understands how hard this can be. We know that there is always hope for something different.

### Taking steps towards recovery

Moving forwards with self harm can be a difficult process, but recovery is entirely possible. There are many different things that might help you take steps in the right direction and what's important is that you explore and find the things that are going to be most helpful for you. You may find that different things are useful at different times, and their relevance will depend upon what is behind or is driving the self harm.

This leaflet has been developed by people with personal and professional experience of self harm, and is designed to introduce some basic concepts that might help you. Try to remember that even if these things don't work for you, that there are many other ways to start your recovery. Don't be disheartened and remember to contact us to see how else we can help.



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

Neither do we.

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# Self Harm: Towards Hope & Recovery



## Self help coping strategies

### **Diary**

Keep a diary to express yourself and explore some of the thoughts and feelings that you have. Having a place where you can practise putting your experiences into words can be really helpful. It can also be useful to monitor any patterns in your thoughts and feelings, and the relationship between these and your urges to self harm. Developing an understanding of these patterns will help you to take control in future.

### **Talk to someone**

Being able to speak to someone about your feelings can help in a number of ways: expressing yourself may reduce the strong feelings and it may also enable you to get some care and support. You might feel able to talk to a friend or family member, or speaking anonymously to a helpline may feel like a better option. Try and make a start by thinking of someone that you feel safe to talk to, or who may be able to help you.

### **Try the 10 minute rule**

This can be a really useful technique. If you feel like self harming, and the urge is getting stronger, try to postpone self harming for ten minutes (or a different length of time if this feels too long). Telling yourself NOT to do it may make the urge stronger, but 'postponing' harming may feel manageable. If after 10 minutes you still feel like self harming you can still turn to this, or again you can postpone it for a further 10 minutes. Continue doing this for as long as is necessary.

For many people self harm happens when emotions are at their most intense. In waiting for 10 minutes, this intensity can start to fade and the urge may go away or lessen. During the 10 minutes, make yourself busy by trying some of the following distraction techniques.

## Distraction techniques

If you are feeling...

### **Anger / Stressed:**

- Hit a pillow
- Put on loud music and sing / shout
- Do physical activity to get rid of some of the energy (such as running or stamping around)
- On a piece of paper, write down why you are feeling that way and then tear it up
- Use lavender oil (in a bath or on your pillow)
- Clean / tidy

### **Disassociated / Spaced Out:**

- Stamp your feet on the ground. Feel the difference between hard and soft ground beneath your feet
- Have a hot bath
- Concentrate on your surroundings – describe what you can see and hear around you. Use essential oils (smells) and sounds to focus you
- Touch things hot and cold, smooth and rough

### **Inner Pain / Sadness / Loneliness:**

- Talk to someone – call a friend or a helpline
- Make yourself feel comfortable (use pillows and blankets to comfort you physically)
- Make yourself a hot drink or your favourite food
- Look at photographs of people you love
- Go to a favourite place (attached to a positive or happy memory)

### **Out of Control / Panicked:**

- Concentrate on a simple task
- Write an action plan of things you'd like to achieve and the steps you can take to achieve them
- Gardening and cleaning
- Take a walk from where you are to a specific place. Take your time, concentrate on your footsteps and try to slow your breathing



## Support services

Long term help and support:

### **GP**

Your GP may be able to offer support for your self harm, and make referrals to appropriate services. If you have a good relationship with your GP, then this might be a good place to start.

### **Local Mental Health Team**

Referrals are usually taken from your GP. Your mental health team may assign you a social worker or psychiatric nurse to provide specialist emotional and practical support, and access to medications.

### **Counselling Service**

There may be a counselling service in your local area or a counsellor may be attached to your GP surgery. Counsellors can provide you with a safe space to talk, support you in establishing goals, and develop approaches to address emotional distress. They can also help you learn skills in coping and communication, and promote positive changes in behaviour that nurture improved mental well-being.

### **Psychotherapy**

There are different forms of psychotherapy and psychotherapists that will be able to help you. Usually you have to speak to your GP first, but they may be able to offer you help over a longer period of time. Therapists will help by working in a similar way to a counsellor, reflecting on the drivers to your self harm and moving towards alternative coping strategies.