

Self-Harm Resources

For
Professionals

This booklet is designed to help professionals understand self-harm and why someone might engage with self-harm. This booklet highlights what to do if someone discloses self-harm to you and what the signs are.

It is also sign-posts other services and informational websites for professionals to direct children and young people to if they need more support regarding their self-harm.

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What is self-harm?

Self-harm is when someone hurts themselves on purpose to cope with difficult feelings, memories,

or overwhelming situations. People may self-harm as a way to express these difficult experiences or even when they are feeling numb as a way to feel something.

People may self-harm in various ways:

- Cutting, scratching, and picking at skin
- Burning and scalding
- Misusing recreational or prescription drugs and/or alcohol
- Hitting yourself or hitting walls
- Over-eating or under-eating
- Biting yourself
- Hair pulling
- Swallowing objects
- Inserting objects into the body
- Having unsafe sex

What are the signs someone I support may be self-harming?

A young person that you support may:

- Keep themselves fully covered at all times, even in hot weather.
- Have unexplained cuts, bruises or burn marks on their body or any other signs of self-inflicted injuries.
- Have outbursts of anger or argumentativeness
- Become withdrawn and not speak to many people.
- Display low mood, tearfulness, or a lack of motivation.
- Show signs of low self-esteem and speak negatively about themselves.

What do I do if someone I support tells me they are self-harming?

Respond calmly and compassionately and try not to overreact or panic. How you respond to the young person can influence their ability to continue to talk about their self-harm and seek support from others.

Follow the relevant safeguarding protocol and procedures in place within your organisation and be clear with the young person what the limits are regarding confidentiality (this is important for when you may need to share that the young person you support has been self-harming with either family members or other professionals involved in their care).

Speak with the young person about how they would feel about you reaching out to organisations about seeking support on their behalf. Various services and helplines will be listed further down that you may sign post the young person towards.

What helps?

- Being non-judgemental
- Letting the young person know you are there for them
- Try to understand their experiences and emotions, rather than focusing on their self-harm
- Offer to help them find support (Websites and contacts are listed below)
- Speak to the person you support about their positive qualities and remind them of what they are doing well
- Taking all self-harm seriously
- Where possible, let the person you support be in control of their decisions, but get them medical attention if needed
- Making a self-soothing box with the young person
- Thinking together with the young person you support about what other strategies and resources they could draw upon to cope with their emotions

It is important to note that if you feel a young person's health is in immediate danger following self-harm, to seek urgent medical care by either calling 999 or taking them to your nearest Accident and Emergency Department

What doesn't help?

Even when approaching situations with the best intentions, there are some reactions that aren't helpful after learning that someone you support is self-harming:

- Trying to force them to change what they are doing
- Ignoring their injuries or overly focusing on them
- Asking abrupt and rapid questions
- Making assumptions about their self-harm
- Trying to comment, advise or attempting fix all of their difficulties (in the first instance)
- Communicating or acting in a way that threatens to take control away from them
- Labelling the young person's self-harm as attention seeking

Where can I find more information and where can I sign-post a young person to if they want further support regarding their self-harm?

- **Mind:** For everyone
Call 0300 123 3393 – 9am to 6pm Monday to Friday
Website: <https://www.mind.org.uk/>
- **Harmless:** <https://harmless.org.uk/>
- **Papyrus:** for people under 35
Call 0800 068 41 41 – 9am to midnight every day
Text 07860 039967
Website: <https://www.papyrus-uk.org/papyrus-hopelineuk/>
- **Battle Scars:** <https://www.battle-scars-self-harm.org.uk/>
- **LifeSIGNS:** <https://www.lifesigns.org.uk/>
- **The Mix:** Offers a variety of support and resources for under 25's
Website: <https://www.themix.org.uk/>
- **Sane:** For everyone
 - Call 0300 304 7000 – 4pm to 10pm everyday
 - Email Support: support@sane.org.uk
 - Website: <https://www.sane.org.uk/>

- **Samaritans:** For Everyone
Call 116 123 – 24 hours every day of the year
Email Support: jo@samaritans.org
Website: <https://www.samaritans.org/>
- **Childline:** For 18 and younger
Call 0800 1111 – 24 hours 7 days a week (there are not as many staff available after midnight)
- **YoungMinds:** For people under the age of 25
Text line: SHOUT – Available 24/7
Text YM to 85258
Website: <https://www.youngminds.org.uk/>
- **CALM:** Helpline for men of all ages
Call 0800 58 58 58 – 4pm to midnight
Website: thecalmzone.net
- **Apps:**
- **CalmHarm:** Available on IOS and Android Devices – provides distractions, games, tasks and exercises for when you feel like harming yourself
- **distrACT:** For 17 years old and above – Available on IOS and Android Devices – offers tips, advice and distractions as well as a calm zone, support and emergency contacts
- **Stress and Anxiety Companion:** Available on IOS and Android Devices - Provides exercises and information

