

Keep Safe

Let's talk about self harm



What is self harm?

Self-harm or self-injury is common and can affect women and men across all ages and cultures. People often hide self-harm, but it's not something to be ashamed of. Often feelings of shame can get in the way of asking for help.

Many people describe hurting themselves as a way of dealing with difficult feelings or an overwhelming situation. Often people who self-harm are experiencing extreme distress and self-harm is a way of coping. People might harm themselves in different ways such as;

- Cutting
- Taking too much medication
- Burning
- Hair pulling
- Excessive scratching
- Hitting yourself

It can be really difficult to talk about self-harm with other people but it is important not to suffer in silence. Getting support to manage the reasons for the difficult feelings and discovering different ways of coping can help you to overcome self-harm.

Getting help

Although an ideal goal might be to stop self harm completely, it is important to think carefully about this before 'just stopping' especially if it has helped you to manage distress. You may want to think about a plan for a gradual reduction, and put in place support for your difficult thoughts and feelings first. Here are some ideas;

- Open up and talk to someone you trust
- See your GP for advice and routes to talking treatments such as counselling or Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT)
- Go to A&E for treatment for your injuries
- **42nd Street** offer support for self-harm to young people aged 13-25 who have a GP in Manchester, Salford or Trafford. Call 0161 228 1888 Mon & Thurs 2pm-5pm and Friday 1.30pm-4.30pm
- **SHARE** is a self help group supporting people experiencing issues around self harm. They meet every Tuesday 6-8pm at the Zion Centre, Hulme, M15 4ZY. Facebook or Email selfhelpselfharmgroup@googlemail.com
- Visit **www.mhim.org.uk** for more services in Manchester

Helping yourself:

There are things that you can do to help yourself if you feel the urge to self-harm:

- Talk to someone you trust
 - Distract yourself, go out, read or do something else that interests you
 - Write a diary about your feelings
 - Stay healthy and active, keep a good sleep routine, see friends and do the things you enjoy. Learn about the Five Ways to Wellbeing, visit www.mhim.org.uk for ideas
- Begin to understand your triggers and patterns of self harm. Here are some questions that may help:

- *What was happening in your life when you first began harming yourself?*
- *What seems to trigger the feeling now?*
- *Are you always at a certain place or with a certain person?*
- *Do you have thoughts or memories that are too frightening to tell someone?*
- *Is there anything else you can think of that makes you want to harm yourself?*

Once you understand what is happening better for yourself, it may make it easier to explain to other people. Even if you're not sure of the reasons it is important to seek help.

Helping someone else

It can be really shocking and upsetting to find out that someone you care about is self harming, but your attitude to their harming and how you talk to them can really help them to feel supported. Here are some tips;

- Let them know that you care and are there to listen if they would like to talk
- Remind them that they are still the person you know and love with lots of qualities and talents
- Support them with any plans they choose to make to stop or limit the self-harm
- Help them to see any relapse to self-harm as part of the process of recovering and not as a failure
- Help them to keep safe. Many people who self harm don't want to die, but if you are worried that they may be considering taking their own life, ask them explicitly and seek help
- Try not to ask them to stop the self harm or to become upset or angry with them
- Look after yourself. Supporting someone who self-harms can be worrying and upsetting. Share the burden by finding someone to talk to in confidence

