

Self-harm and suicidal Ideation

What is it?

Self-harm is when you hurt yourself as a way of dealing with very difficult feelings, painful memories or overwhelming situations and experiences. Some people have described self-harm as a way to:

- Express something that is hard to put into words
- Turn invisible thoughts or feelings into something visible
- Change emotional pain into physical pain
- Reduce overwhelming emotional feelings or thoughts
- Have a sense of being in control
- Escape traumatic memories
- Have something in life that they can rely on
- Punish yourself for your feelings and experiences
- Stop feeling numb, disconnected or dissociated (see dissociative disorders)
- Create a reason to physically care for themselves
- Express suicidal feelings and thoughts without taking their own life.

Self-harm is not 'just attention-seeking' - people self-harm because they are in pain and trying to cope. They could also be trying to show that something is wrong. They need to be taken seriously. Self-harm is a term used when someone injures or harms themselves on purpose rather than by accident.

How to identify?

Common examples include 'overdosing' (self-poisoning), hitting, cutting or burning oneself, pulling hair or picking skin, or self-strangulation.

It can also include taking illegal drugs and excessive amounts of alcohol.

Self-harm is always a sign of something being seriously wrong.

Self-harm is a way of dealing with very difficult feelings that build up inside.

Effective strategies to help?

There are a number of ways to help you in the long term. They include a deeper exploration of the reasons why you self-harm, to help you find alternatives:

- Accept your feelings
- Build your self-esteem
- Look after your general wellbeing
- Understand you're self-harm in more detail
- Reach out for support
- Sometimes outside support is needed to help you make positive changes. You may need to try a few different things to find what works for you, and combine self-help techniques with professional support:

GP

Talking treatments

- Support groups
- Online support
- Treatment for scars

Useful link

<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/self-harm/#.WWTDMBXyuvE> – MIND

<https://www.selfinjurysupport.org.uk/> - Self Injury Support

<http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/Self-injury/Pages/Introduction.aspx> - NHS

<http://www.harmless.org.uk/> - Harmless Self Harm Support