

SELF HARM

What is self harm?

It's when you intentionally harm or damage your body and could include: –

- Cutting or scratching your skin
- Burning or scolding yourself
- Hitting yourself or banging your head
- Sticking objects into your skin
- Preventing wounds from healing
- Swallowing poisonous substances or inappropriate objects

Why do people do it?

- To cope with feelings for example sadness, self-loathing, guilt, anger
- To express or release feelings that you can't put into words
- To punish yourself
- To feel in control
- To distract yourself from other overwhelming feelings
- To feel something instead of feeling numb

It's often a distractor from other forms of usually psychological pain, or, a way of taking control when everything else feels out of control.

What are the downsides of self harm?

- Short lived relief and the issues still exist afterwards, added to which, you may also feel shame and guilt about the self harm
- It is a lonely form of control and a heavy burden to carry
- You may hurt yourself more seriously than intended, for example, wounds may become infected and may lead to other more serious health problems ie sepsis

- The behaviour can become addictive and then seems impossible to stop, as it becomes the paramount coping mechanism

How can you understand your triggers?

- Keep a journal to note your feelings
- Write down what was happening prior to the self harm and what feelings you were experiencing. This will begin to help you identify the triggers for self harm. Note down how you felt during and after self harming, to isolate what feelings or emotions you are looking for

Use new coping techniques, such as:

- Paint or draw
- Write stories or poems
- Play or learn an instrument
- Write down negative thoughts and then rip the paper up
- Talk to a friend or family member
- Eat something with a strong taste
- Do some vigorous exercise or dance

Use new replacement activities, for example:

- Use a red marker pen to draw where you might cut
- Rub ice cubes on the area where you might cut
- Snap rubber bands on wrists arms or legs instead of cutting

And finally, consider getting some professional help so that you are not doing this alone