

Self-harm: what you need to know

YOU DESERVE SUPPORT



Compassionate information for understanding, responding and finding support

WHAT IS SELF-HARM?

Self-harm means intentionally injuring or poisoning yourself. It can be a way of coping with overwhelming feelings, numbness, memories, pressure or a need for release. It is not attention-seeking, weakness or something to punish.

WHY MIGHT IT HAPPEN?

There is no single reason. People may be dealing with distress, trauma, conflict, isolation, shame, sensory overload or difficulties naming and regulating emotion. The behaviour may bring brief relief, but the pain underneath still deserves care.

WHAT CAN HELP?

Pause and reduce access to anything you might use. Move towards another person or a safer place. Delay the urge, ground through the senses, use gentle movement, write or message someone. A GP or mental-health professional can help you build a personalised safety plan.

IF YOU ARE SUPPORTING SOMEONE

Stay calm, listen without judgement and take them seriously. Ask what would help now. Avoid threats, blame or demanding promises. Encourage medical care when needed and help them contact trusted or professional support.

MEDICAL AND URGENT SUPPORT

Get medical advice for injuries, burns, wounds, poisoning or overdose—even if you feel unsure. If you have seriously harmed yourself, your life is in danger, or you feel you may be about to harm yourself: call 999 or go to A&E. For urgent mental-health help, call NHS 111 and choose the mental-health option. Samaritans: 116 123. Shout: text SHOUT to 85258.