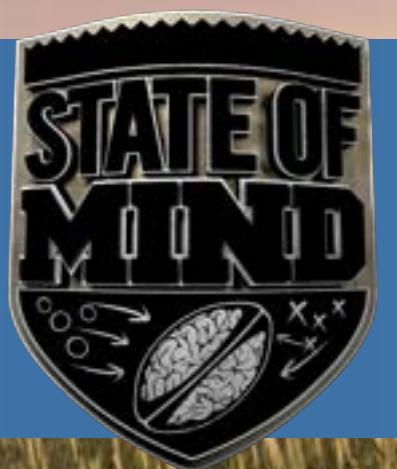




[WWW.STATEOFMINDSPORT.ORG/GUIDANCE](http://WWW.STATEOFMINDSPORT.ORG/GUIDANCE)

# SELF-HARM

| Practical Guidance  
First Published: January 2020



Prepared by:  
Sue Hooton OBE, Owen Cotterell

# WHAT IS SELF-HARM... AND WHY DO PEOPLE DO IT?

## WHAT IS SELF-HARM...

Self-harm is when somebody intentionally damages or injures their body. It's usually a way of coping with, or expressing difficult feelings or overwhelming emotional distress. It is more common than people might think.

Although it is known that self-harm occurs more commonly in females, self-harm is experienced by both males and females. 10% of young people are reported to self-harm.

<https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/publications/truth-about-self-harm>

## WHY DO PEOPLE SELF-HARM?

People have explained 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 TO RELY ON AND CONTROL

PUNISH YOURSELF FOR YOUR FEELINGS AND EXPERIENCES

STOP FEELING NUMB OR DISCONNECTED

CREATE A REASON TO PHYSICALLY CARE FOR YOURSELF

EXPRESS SUICIDAL FEELINGS WITHOUT TAKING MY OWN LIFE

SELF-HARMING CAN RESULT IN A SHORT-TERM SENSE OF RELEASE, BUT THE CAUSE OF DISTRESS IS UNLIKELY TO GO AWAY. SELF-HARM CAN ALSO BRING UP VERY DIFFICULT EMOTIONS AND HAS THE POTENTIAL TO MAKE YOU FEEL WORSE.

## HOW CAN PEOPLE GET HELP FOR SELF-HARM?

SELF-HARM IS OFTEN AN INDICATION THAT A PERSON NEEDS HELP WHEN THEY DON'T KNOW WHERE ELSE TO TURN. IN SERIOUS AND UNTREATED CASES, SELF-HARM CAN ALSO INDICATE FEELINGS OF SUICIDE. THINGS THAT MIGHT HELP ARE:



### TALK

Look out for someone you can trust and talk to them. Share how you're feeling and explore other sources of support with them.



### IT'S OK TO ASK

It's ok to seek help - self-harm is a lot more common than you might think and people are seeking help everyday.



### HEALTH WORKER

Understand that health workers are available to help. They see people who self-harm regularly and can help you develop a plan to manage your self-harm.



### YOUR GP

Your GP is able to direct you to support close to home, if you feel able to speak to them.



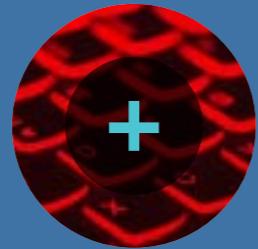
### HELPLINES

Confidential helplines are available (see list at the end of this document). They can put you in touch with other people who have been in the same position.



### WEB FORUMS

There are well managed self-harm forums offering support on the internet. Only use trusted sites (see the list at the end of this document).



### WEB AWARE

Be aware that there is anonymous and often malicious content on the internet that plays on people's vulnerability and might actually encourage self-harm.



### COPING

There are many different coping strategies to help with self-harm, and people out there to help you find the right one for you.

## GETTING HELP



## WHAT PROFESSIONAL HELP IS AVAILABLE IF I WANT IT?

### WHAT COULD STOP YOU...

You might be scared of being seen as different from others. Stigma is the single biggest barrier to seeking professional help. Not feeling a sense of safety and trust when you are accessing support.

### REMEMBER...

...you are never alone.  
Talk to a mate.  
Ring a helpline.  
Go online.

There are many organisations and resources that can help you professionally. These include:

**National Self-Harm Network** [www.nshn.co.uk](http://www.nshn.co.uk)

**Selfharm UK** [www.selfharm.co.uk](http://www.selfharm.co.uk)

**Mind** [www.mind.org.uk/information-support](http://www.mind.org.uk/information-support)

**NHS Self-Harm Support**

[www.nhs.uk/conditions/self-harm/getting-help/](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/self-harm/getting-help/)

**Papyrus Hopeline UK** 0800 068 41 41

[www.papyrus-uk.org/self-injury-awareness-day/](http://www.papyrus-uk.org/self-injury-awareness-day/)

**The Truth About Self-Harm**

[www.mentalhealth.org.uk/publications/truth-about-self-harm](http://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/publications/truth-about-self-harm)

**Samaritans** 116 123 (24 hours a day)

[www.samaritans.org/how-we-can-help/support-and-information-if-you're-having-difficult-time/if-you-want-self-harm/](http://www.samaritans.org/how-we-can-help/support-and-information-if-you're-having-difficult-time/if-you-want-self-harm/)

**Young Minds Helpline** 0808 802 5544

Support for parents of young people who self-harm.

Young Minds parents' helpline (9.30am to 4pm on weekdays).