

# SELF-HARM IN CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE



IF SUPPORT IS NEEDED STRAIGHT AWAY, YOU CAN CALL 999 OR GO STRAIGHT TO THE NEAREST ACCIDENT AND EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT IF YOU CAN FIND A MEANS OF TRAVEL SAFELY.

## WHAT IS SELF-HARM?

Self-harm is the act of hurting oneself as a method of dealing with various things going on in our lives. For Children and Young People, situations can be but not limited to, school/work pressures, stress, Strain/breakdown in relationships, physical/sexual/emotional abuse, sexuality, bullying, peer pressure or bereavement. These can result in painful thoughts, memories, and difficult feelings that can be extremely hard to deal with and become overwhelming for any person young or old.

## WHAT CAN IT LOOK LIKE?

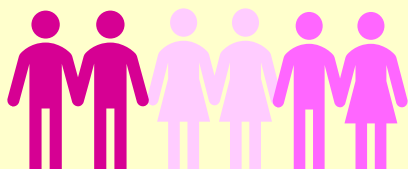
Initially, many automatically think the word 'Self-Harm' is associated with cutting oneself. However, it actually covers a multitude of things from:

- Picking your skin
- Scratching
- Pulling eyelashes/hair out
- Taking Alcohol or Drugs
- Pushing your body to extreme limits
- Practicing unsafe sex or taking part in sexualised behaviour
- Hitting your head off a wall/floor
- Punching yourself

This list can go on and on. It is unique to the individual, and they may not register or realise some of these actions are self-harm.

## REMEMBER...

Self-Harm does not discriminate, anyone of any gender, age, religion, and background can resort to self-harming.



## WHY DO CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SELF-HARM?

Sometimes they cannot share their feelings, feel alone, confused, or uncertain which can lead to self-harm.

It can feel like:

- A Form of Release
- Gaining a Sense of Control
- A Form of Punishment
- Gaining a Sense of Escape

There can be many reasons behind why a Child or Young Person is feeling this way. Their feelings, thoughts and experiences are valid.

## WARNING SIGNS OF SELF-HARM



**Low Mood**  
Prolonged feelings of sadness, depression, tiredness etc.



**Covering Up**  
Wearing long sleeves, trousers etc. even in hot weather.



**Isolation**  
Withdrawing from social situations, family, friends etc.



**Changes in Eating Habits**  
Eating a lot more or less food than normal.

# HOW CAN I HELP MY CHILD IF THEY ARE SELF-HARMING?

1. **PATIENCE AND SUPPORT** – It is helpful to go at the Child or Young Persons own pace. Take some time with them to develop an understanding of how they are feeling. Encourage your child to be patient and kind to themselves.
2. **ENCOURAGING DISCUSSION** – It can be difficult for them to share how they feel. Show they are not alone and people who want to support them.
3. **DON'T BEAT YOURSELF UP** – Nobody is to blame; life can be hard, and it is difficult to cope at times.
4. **LOOK AFTER YOURSELF** – To look after others we need to take care of ourselves.

## SELF-CARE

Taking care of yourself mentally and physically can identify some distractions or delay strategies to reduce the urge to self-harm.

Think of activities your Child and Young Person would enjoy. Plan to do them together or help them make time for themselves throughout the day or week.

Some examples could be:

- Going for a Walk or Hike
- Listening to a Podcast or Music
- Cooking or Baking
- Sketching
- Playing cards/ board games
- Reading a Book



**CAN YOU THINK OF ANYMORE?**

The Miracle Foundation SCIO are a bereavement and trauma organisation for Children and Young People between the age of 4 and 18 years old.

We have a great team of counsellors and art therapists that can help you deal with the thoughts and feelings you are experiencing. We will help you develop healthy techniques to deal with your emotions, build on your emotional strength and provide you with a hope for the future. We are here to support and help you when you are struggling during difficult times.

**IF YOU NEED HELP/SUPPORT STRAIGHT AWAY, YOU CAN CALL 999 OR GO STRAIGHT TO MY NEAREST ACCIDENT AND EMERGENCY DEPT IF YOU CAN GET THERE SAFELY.**

## REACHING OUT FOR SUPPORT!

It is ok to reach out to a trusted friend, family member or adult.

There are also trained specialists and professionals who are here to support you and anyone else who are self-harming.

The Miracle Foundation have a great team of counsellors and art therapists that can help you. We are here to support and help you when you are struggling through difficult times.

### USEFUL CONTACTS

If someone is at risk of coming to harm, the services would need to get in touch with emergency services or appropriate authorities.

### CHILDLINE

A confidential service, operating times can be found on the website.

**TEL: 0800 1111**

**ONLINE COUNSELLING: 1-2-1 chat**

### SHOUT

A free confidential and anonymous service available 24/7.

**TEXT: 85258**

### SAMARITANS

Whatever you are going through, Samaritans can be called any time, from any phone for free.

**TEL: 116 123**

### BREATHING SPACE

A free, confidential, phone service for anyone in Scotland over the age of 16 experiencing low mood, depression, or anxiety.

**TEL: 0800838587**



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