

SELF-HARM Support

Self-harm is defined as intentional self-poisoning or self-injury, regardless of the apparent purpose of the act.

Source: NICE Guidelines 2022

Self-harm is a means to manage difficult emotions or feel some control, keeping a sense of hope. It does not necessarily mean that the person wants to die.



Common forms of self-harm

Self-harm can take many different forms, but here are some of the common forms to be aware of:

- Cutting the skin (using sharp objects)
- Scratching or burning the skin
- Hitting or punching oneself or objects
- Interfering with wound healing (e.g. picking scabs)
- Hair pulling
- Ingesting harmful substances (non-lethal amounts of medication, chemicals, etc.)

DID YOU KNOW?



Around 20% of young people in the UK have self-harmed. That's equivalent to one in every five teens.

Source: The Mental Health Foundation

Why do people self harm?

Self-harm is not a "cry for attention." Young people may do it to:

- **Cope with overwhelming emotions:** Some young people feel so upset, angry, anxious, or sad that they don't know how else to express or release those feelings. Self-harm can feel like a temporary way to "let the pressure out." It may bring a brief sense of relief — though that relief doesn't last and often leads to guilt or shame later.
- **To feel something when they feel numb:** Sometimes, emotional pain can turn into numbness — feeling nothing at all. Self-harm might be used to feel something real again, even if it's physical pain.
- **To regain a sense of control:** When life feels chaotic or out of control — due to stress, trauma, or conflict — self-harm can seem like one thing the person can control. It can become a private, secret way to manage what feels unmanageable.
- **To express feelings they can't put into words:** Some young people struggle to talk about emotions or might not have the words for what they feel.
- **To punish themselves:** Feelings of guilt, shame, or self-hatred can lead someone to believe they "deserve" to be hurt.
- **Underlying mental health issues:** Self-harm often occurs alongside: Depression, Anxiety, Trauma or PTSD, Eating Disorders, Borderline Personality Traits, Substance use.

Supporting a young person who may be self-harming

Stay calm and listen – Don't judge or panic. Listen with empathy and thank them for trusting you. Avoid insisting someone stop self-harming immediately. Removing a coping strategy without support or alternatives can increase distress and risk.

Acknowledge feelings – Understand that self-harm is often a way of coping with deep emotional pain.

Encourage safer coping – Suggest alternatives like writing, drawing, breathing exercises, or talking to someone they trust.

Keep checking in – Show ongoing care and help them build a support network.

Get professional help – Tell a family member, GP, or counsellor.

In an emergency, call 999 or go to A&E.

If they're in immediate danger: Stay with them and call emergency services or contact Papyrus HOPELINE247 (0800 068 4141 / text 88247).



Support & Advice

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**South Leicestershire
School Sports Partnership**



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Supporting South Leicestershire Schools to provide opportunities for all young people

This flyer was produced by the South Leicestershire School Sports Partnership. The partnership is a not-for-profit organisation committed to improving the health and well-being of children, young people, and school staff across 83 schools in South Leicestershire.

Our vision is simple but powerful: we strive to give all children, young people, and school staff outstanding opportunities to develop lifelong healthy behaviours. The strength of our Partnership comes from collaboration with schools, families, and key community organisations, all working together to embed well-being into everyday school life.

At SLSSP, we believe in winning hearts and inspiring minds.



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