

The Truth About Self-Harm for Young People and Their Friends and Families

Self-harm describes any behaviour where someone causes harm to themselves, usually as a way to help cope with difficult or distressing thoughts and feelings. It most frequently takes the form of cutting, burning or non-lethal overdoses. However, it can also be any behaviour that causes injury – no matter how minor, or high-risk behaviours. Basically, any behaviour that causes harm or injury to someone as a way to deal with difficult emotions can be seen as self-harm. Because there may be some temporary relief at the start, self-harm can become someone's normal way of dealing with life's difficulties. This means that it is important to talk to someone as early as possible to get the right support and help. Learning new coping strategies to deal with these difficulties can make it easier to break the cycle of self-harm in the long term.

The Self-Harm Cycle:

Self-harm usually starts as a way to relieve the build-up of pressure from distressing thoughts and feelings. This might give temporary relief from the emotional pain the person is feeling. It's important to know that this relief is only temporary because the underlying reasons still remain. Soon after, feelings of guilt and shame might follow, which can continue the cycle.



Temporary Relief Who Does It?

There is no such thing as a typical young person who self-harms. Self-harm is something that can affect anyone. It's believed that around 10% of young people self-harm, but it could be as high as 20%. If you self-harm, there are a lot of people who also know what you're going through. While it is true that anyone can be affected by self-harm, some people are more likely to self-harm than others because of things that have happened in their lives - where they live, things that are happening with friends, family or at school, or a combination of these. This means that some people are more at risk of self-harm than others. Some factors might make someone more at risk.

Experience of A Mental Health Disorder.

This might include depression, anxiety, borderline personality disorder, and eating disorders. Being a young person who is not under the care of their parents, or young people who have

left a care home. Having been bereaved by suicide. It is important to remember that although these are risk factors that can make someone more likely to self-harm, having any of these does not mean someone will self-harm. Similarly, someone who self-harms might not experience any of these. Anyone can be affected.

Why do people self-harm?

Everyone has different things that cause stress and worry them. Some people can manage these troubles by talking to friends and family, while others may find these difficulties overwhelming. When we don't express our emotions and talk about the things that make us distressed, angry or upset, the pressure can build up and become unbearable. Some people turn this in on themselves and use their bodies as a way to express the thoughts and feelings they can't say aloud. People often harm themselves when this all gets too much. If you self-harm, you might find that when you feel angry, distressed, worried or depressed, you feel the urge to hurt yourself even more. Someone's reason for self-harm can be very different from other people who self-harm. Some of the reasons that young people report as triggers or reasons that lead them to self-harm include difficulties at home arguments or problems with friends' school pressures bullying depression anxiety low self-esteem transitions and changes, such as changing schools' alcohol and drug use. When a few of these issues come together they can quickly feel overwhelming and become too much for one person to deal with. As one young person said, many people self-harm to 'get out the hurt, anger and pain' caused by pressures in their lives. They hurt themselves because they didn't know what else to do and didn't feel like they had any other options. Talking to someone you trust or a healthcare professional can help you find other options for coping with the emotional pain you are feeling.

Culled from; [mentalhealth.gov.uk](https://www.mentalhealth.gov.uk)