



Craigmount

High School

aim high · adapt · succeed



Self-Harm Information and Support



About 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.

What is Self-Harm

Self-harm is behaviour that is done deliberately to harm oneself. At least 10% of adolescents report having self-harmed. Self-harm is when somebody intentionally damages or injures their bodies, usually as a response to overwhelming feelings and/or distress. Self-harm can include, for example:

- self-cutting
- taking an overdose
- hitting or bruising
- intentionally taking too little or too much medication
- burning

Although some people who self-harm may be suicidal, self-harm is often used as a way of managing difficult emotions without being a suicide attempt. However, self-harming can result in accidental death. After self-harming people can have sense of relief however this is often quickly overtaken by feelings of shame, pain and regret.

What causes Self-Harm

Some factors that might make someone more at risk are:

- 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.
- Being part of the LGBTQi community.
- 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, and some may do it for the reasons below;

- to reduce tension
- to manage extreme emotional upset
- to distract them from emotional pain
- to express emotions such as hurt, anger or frustration
- to regain control over feelings or problems
- to punish themselves or others
- to receive care from others
- to identify with a peer group

It is important to remember that self-harm can affect anyone.

You may find these websites helpful;

www.youngminds.org.uk – Self Harm – Having the first conversation

<https://www.cwmt.org.uk/> - Coping with Self Harm – Resources for Schools and Families

www.harmless.org.uk – Coping Strategies

www.mind.org.uk – Information for Young People

www.youngminds.org.uk – No Harm Done

<https://self-compassion.org/category/exercises/> - Meditation and breathing techniques

www.childline.org.uk

www.breathingspace.scot

Helpful Distractions and Strategies

There are several strategies and distractions which can be used when young people are experiencing overwhelming feeling of distress. These strategies can help them to avoid coping with these strong feelings by self-harming.

Not all strategies will help everyone. In this booklet there are lots of suggestions of strategies and it is important to persevere with one/some of them to see if they work.

There are examples of each of these strategies in this booklet;

Try an alternative – these might help you replicate self-harm without hurting yourself

Reinforce why you do not want to self-harm - thinking about why it is important to you

Comforting alternatives – make yourself feel good

Constructive alternatives – do something which will have a product

Fun alternatives – take your mind off it with fun

Distracting yourself with others – being around other people can help

Physical alternatives – doing exercise realises happy hormones which make you feel good

Creative alternatives – make something

Inspiring yourself not to self-harm – look at the positives in the World around you

Try an alternative

1. Drawing on yourself in red marker
2. Snapping an elastic band/hair bobble on your wrist
3. Putting PVA glue on your skin and peeling it off
4. Putting plasters or bandages on where you want to self-harm
5. Make ices cubes with added red food colouring and rub them on where you want to self-harm
6. Squeezing ice cubes
7. Use stage makeup to create fake injuries
8. Mix warm water and food colouring and put it on your skin
9. Draw yourself or around your arm on a piece of paper, draw the harm you are imagining then destroy the paper
10. Take a hot shower and use a good exfoliating body wash and a sponge or glove and scrub
11. Bite into a chilli

Reinforce why you do not want to self-harm

1. Thinking about not wanting scars in the Summer
2. Thinking about not wanting to go to hospital
3. Set yourself a target – 10 minutes and promise yourself not to harm in this time, once you get to the 10 minute point, set a new target of 15 minutes and continue – reinforce with other coping strategies
4. Use a glow stick, when you feel the urge to harm, snap the glowstick to start the glowing, tell yourself you can't harm until it stops glowing. The glow will last for a few hours, by which time your urges will hopefully have passed

Physical alternatives

- | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| 1. Exercise – sit-ups etc (mini circuit) | 2. Go to the gym |
| 3. Punch a punch bag/pillow/cushion | 4. Have a pillow fight with the wall |
| 5. Shout and scream | 6. Rip up paper into small pieces |

Creative alternatives

- | | |
|--|--------------------------------|
| 1. Write poetry, journals, letters, diary etc. | 2. Doodle or scribble on paper |
| 3. Play a musical instrument | 4. Sing |
| 5. Knit | 6. Draw or paint |
| 7. Origami or a creative challenge | |

Comforting alternatives

- | | |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Cuddle a soft toy/pillow | 2. Allow yourself to cry |
| 3. Sleep | 4. Shower or bath |
| 5. Play with a pet or sibling | 6. Drink a hot chocolate |

Constructive alternatives

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. Do school work, homework, paperwork | 2. Write a to do list |
| 3. Untangle a necklace, string, wool | 4. Organise your room, clothes, photos |
| 5. Clean | 6. Organise your DVDs/school work etc |
| 7. Read a book | 8. Cook or bake |

9. Call a helpline/access online chat
11. Paint your nails

10. Write a list of positive things
12. Put on nails, fake tan, make-up etc

Fun alternatives

1. Watching your favourite TV show
3. Using internet/social media
5. Use make-up or face paints
7. Colouring in
9. Pop balloons
11. Write your name and make words from it
2. Going to see a film/watch a DVD
4. Listen to music
6. Finger painting
8. Playing with play doh or blu tac
10. Jumping in puddles (being outdoors)
12. Count anything

Distracting yourself with other people

1. Be with other people
3. Help someone else
5. Visit a friend
7. Talk about your problems – without judgement
2. Phone/message a friend
4. Go to a public place/people watch
6. Hug someone

Inspiring yourself not to self-harm

1. Look up into the sky, cloud watch or star gaze
2. Watch a candle burn
3. Meditate
4. Pick an object, a shell or rock for example and focussing on it very closely - observing everything
5. Look at works of art
6. Watch fish, birds or butterflies
7. Yoga/Tai chi

Useful apps/videos

Calm Harm (free) – 

Self-Harm and Self-Care: Tips on how to Cope -

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dtl5zaHicq8>

My Shiny Thing - 

Meditation for Self-Love

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CqnWMPuyTOg>

Self – Heal – 

Yoga for Self-Harm urges and Distressing Emotions

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Af7I84_uh4A

Moods 

What's up 

This document has been produced using the following sources; www.nshn.co.uk & www.nhs.uk



Craigmount

High School

aim high · adapt · succeed



Contact details

If you need support in school please speak with a member of staff you trust. All members of staff are here to support you and will listen.

Pupil Support Leaders, Support for Learning Teachers, Tutor Teachers and Pupils Support Assistants are all here to help.

here to listen
here to talk
here to Help