

Self-Harm

Self-harm is on the rise with teenagers. Many people who self-harm do it because self-harm is often a coping mechanism. The physical pain of self-harm might feel easier to deal with than the emotional pain that's behind it. Sometimes it can be a way for someone to punish themselves for something they've done. It can also make them feel they're in control of something in their life. When a person self-harms, chemicals are released into the brain which can become addictive very quickly. The person may feel an instant relief of pressure and 'bad feelings'. This relief is short lived and is often replaced by feelings of guilt and immediate pressure. This is how the cycle continues.

Physical signs of self-harm

These are commonly on the head, wrists, arms, thighs and chest and include:

- Cuts
- Bruises
- Burns
- Bald patches from pulling out hair
- Young people who self-harm are also very likely to keep themselves covered up in long-sleeved clothes even when it's really hot.

Emotional signs of self-harm

The emotional signs are harder to spot and don't necessarily mean that a young person is self-harming but if you see any of these as well as any of the physical signs then there may be cause for concern.

- Depression, tearfulness and low motivation
- Becoming withdrawn and isolated, for example wanting to be alone in their bedroom for long periods
- Unusual eating habits; sudden weight loss or gain
- Low self-esteem and self-blame
- Drinking or taking drugs

What can you do?

Try to show you understand- it's hard to deal with and can be quite shocking but be patient, something has caused them to self-harm. Just concentrate on trying to help. Avoid making it seem like it's caused a big problem.

Talk it over- If they wish to talk it over then try to find time to do so.

Discover the triggers- Try and find out why they are feeling this way. It maybe you can help reduce the exposure to these triggers.

Build their confidence- Find something they can do and be successful at.

Show you trust them- Our first reactions are likely to be remove their freedom so you can keep an eye on them. Unfortunately, they may turn to more risky and hidden self-harm which could be more dangerous.

Help them find new ways to cope:

<http://www.folkestonegirls.kent.sch.uk/index.php/component/jdownloads/send/17-safeguarding/163-distractions-for-self-harmers>

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/keeping-children-safe/self-harm/>

<https://www.selfharm.co.uk/parents>