

# Self-harm

## A guide for parents and carers



**Easy  
Read**

# Easy Read



This is an Easy Read version of some information. It may not include all of the information but it will tell you about the important parts.



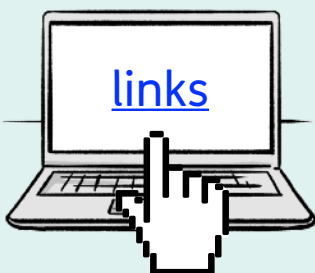
This Easy Read booklet uses easier words and pictures. Some people may still want help to read it.



Some words are in **bold** - this means the writing is thicker and darker. These are important words in the booklet.



Sometimes if a bold word is hard to understand, we will explain what it means.



[Blue and underlined](#) words show links to websites and email addresses. You can click on these links on a computer.

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This Easy Read booklet was produced by [easy-read-online.co.uk](http://easy-read-online.co.uk)  
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# About this booklet



This booklet is for any parent or carer who is worried that their child is hurting themselves on purpose.

This is also known as **self-harm**.



This booklet will help you to:

- Understand self-harm and why your child may do it.



- Know how to help your child stop or manage self-harming.

# What is self-harm?



**Self-harm** is when you hurt your body on purpose.

Here are some examples of self-harm:



- Cutting yourself.



- Burning yourself.

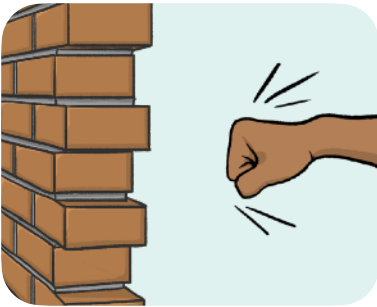


- Taking too much medication.

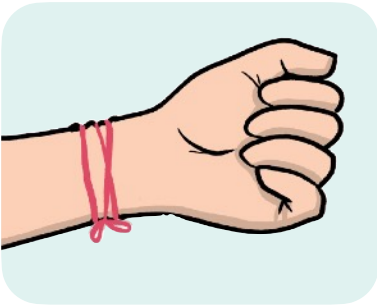
More examples of self-harm include:



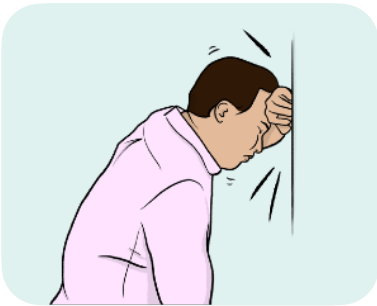
- Scratching your skin too hard.



- Hitting yourself or other objects.



- Tying things around parts of your body.



- Banging your head or pulling your hair.

# Why might someone self-harm?

Many young people who self-harm say it is a way of dealing with:

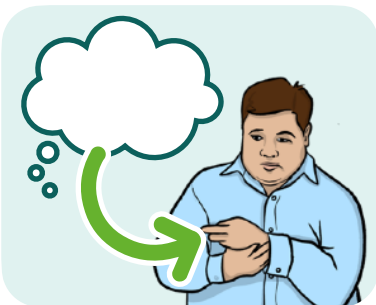


- Very difficult feelings, or



- Difficult things that have happened to them.

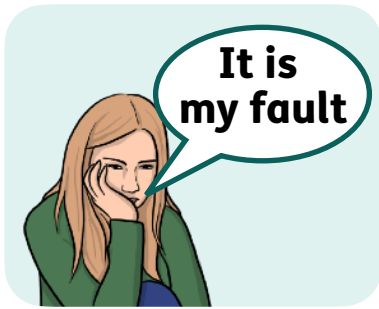
Some young people have also said self-harm is a way for them to:



- Turn thoughts and feelings into something more real.



- Feel in control of themselves.



Some young people have also said self-harm is a way for them to punish themselves.

## Should I be worried about suicide?



**Suicide** or **feeling suicidal** is when someone wants to die and may try to take their own life.



Most young people who self-harm are not suicidal.



But self-harm can lead to death if your child does not manage their self-harming.





If you are worried, you could talk to your child about suicide and suicidal thoughts.



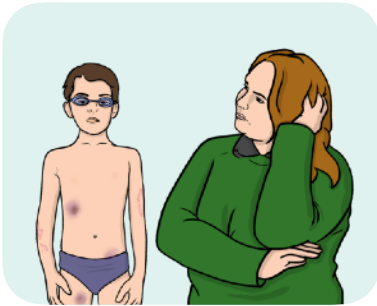
This may seem hard and scary. But talking to your child about this will be helpful.



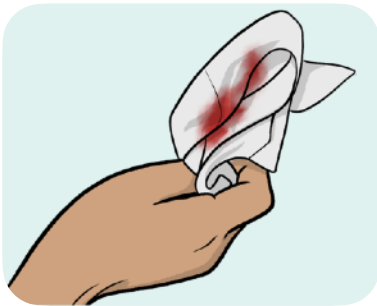
You can get free training on how to talk to your child about suicide here:  
[www.zerosuicidealliance.com/training](http://www.zerosuicidealliance.com/training)

# How do I know if my child is self-harming?

If you are worried that your child may be self-harming, here are some signs to look out for:



- Cuts, burns or bruises on your child's skin that they cannot explain if you ask about them.



- Blood on your child's clothing or on tissues in the bin.



- Your child keeps their skin covered all the time.



- Sharp or dangerous items such as razors or kitchen knives go missing in your home.

Here are some other signs to look out for:



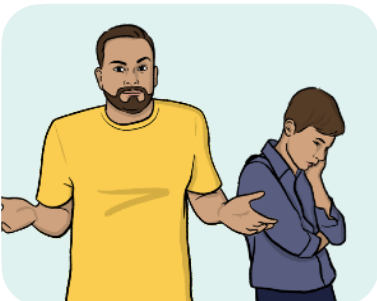
- Your child does not want to talk to or spend time with friends and family.



- Your child seems sad or is in a bad mood all the time.



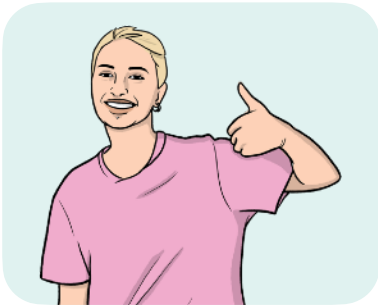
- Your child says it is their fault when problems happen or says that they are useless and fail all the time.



People often hide that they are self-harming because they are embarrassed.



But it is a good idea to make sure your child knows they do not need to be embarrassed.



Getting support for your child will help them to stop or manage self-harming.

## **What should I do if my child is self-harming?**



Your child may tell you that they are self-harming.



Or you may find out your child is self-harming yourself.



Knowing that your child is self-harming may make you feel lots of different emotions.



This includes anger, sadness and embarrassment.



It is normal to feel these emotions.



But it is important to try and understand your child and not judge them.



If you find out your child is self-harming you will need to talk to them about it.



When you start the talk, you do not need to bring up self-harm straight away.



You could start by asking your child if anything is worrying them and how they have been feeling.



Let them know you are not judging them, and that you love and care about them.

If your child does not want to talk:



- See if they will write you a note, email or text message about how they feel.



- Ask if they would like to speak to someone else like a doctor or mental health professional.



If your child wants to talk, try to help them work out why they self-harm.

You can then help them to:



- Think of other ways to manage their feelings, instead of self-harming.



- Follow any plans they make to help them manage and then stop self-harming.



- Get other support that they need.

# How can I support my child if they are self-harming?



We understand you may want your child to stop self-harming completely.



But it is important to think carefully before 'just stopping'.



You may want to support your child to make a plan for slowly managing and then stopping self-harming.



There are some things you can do to help your child manage self-harming.



# Distracting your child



When your child is thinking about self-harming, you can help them to focus on something else instead.

This is called **distracting**.

You can distract your child by:



- Going for a walk outside with them.



- Creating something with them, like a painting or writing a poem.



- Playing with them, like a board game or a video game.



- Exercising with them.

You can also distract your child by:



- Watching TV or a movie with them.



- Setting up a relaxing bath for them.



- Wrapping them in soft blankets and making a safe space for them.

# Letting out feelings



When your child is thinking about self-harming, you can help them to let out their feelings in a different way.

Your child can let out their feelings by:



- Crying.



- Talking to you about their feelings.

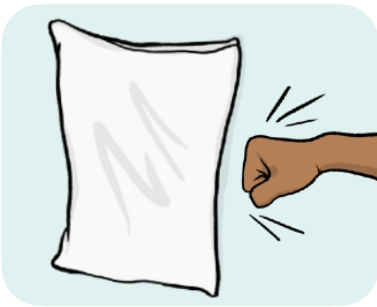


- Writing down how they feel.

Your child can also let out their feelings by:



- Doing exercise or playing sports.



- Hitting something that will not hurt them, like a punchbag, a pillow or a different soft object.



- Listening to loud music.



- Contacting a **helpline**.

A **helpline** is a service you can contact to get support and advice straight away.

# Grounding



If your child is very upset and thinking about self-harming, it may be useful to try **grounding**.



**Grounding** is when you stop thinking about your feelings by focusing on what is happening around you.

You can help your child with grounding by:

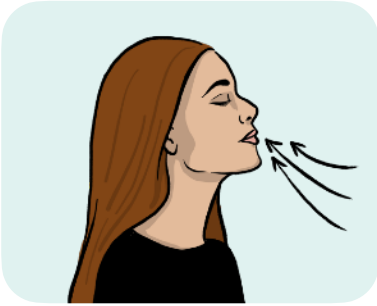


- Giving them an ice cube to hold tightly in their hand until it melts.

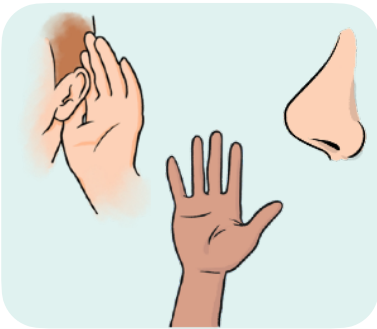


- Putting a cold cloth on their face or back of their neck.

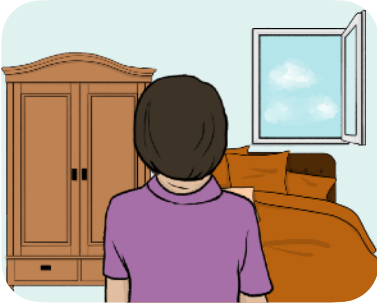
You can also help your child with grounding by:



- Doing breathing exercises with them.



- Asking them to name 5 things they can see, 4 things they can feel, 3 things they can hear, 2 things they can smell and 1 thing they can taste.



- Asking them to name all the things in the room that are blue, then all the things that are green and so on.

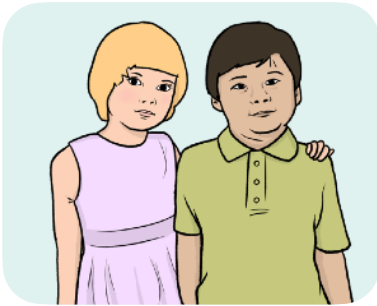
## Other things you can do



You could help your child find an activity or sports team that they would enjoy.

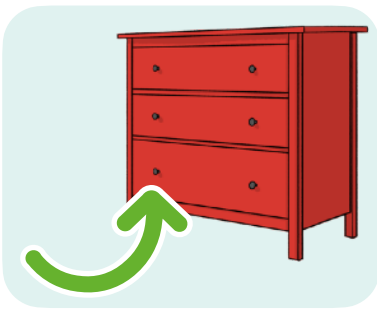


Sports and activities are good ways of distracting your child.

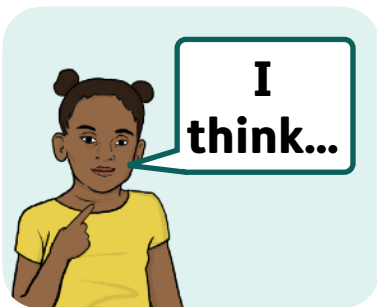


They may also make more friends who can support them.

You could also:



- Move any dangerous objects, like kitchen knives or medication, away from where your child can find them.



Talk to your child about the best way to keep dangerous objects away from them.



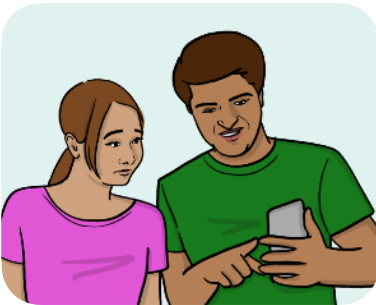
- Try to make sure your child is being safe on **social media**.

**Social media** is websites like Instagram, X and TikTok.

There are some social media accounts that:



- Share images of self-harm.



- Try to make self-harm seem like a good thing.



These social media accounts are dangerous.



Try to make sure your child is not looking at anything online that tries to make self-harming seem like a good thing.



Using social media too much can make it harder to manage your feelings.





You could try and help your child to use social media less in general.

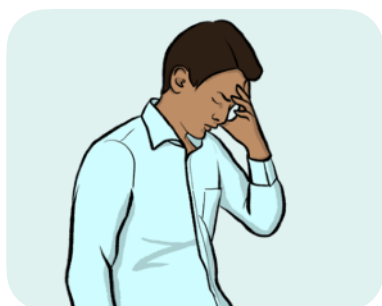


Do not be afraid to still be the same parent to your child, for example not letting them get away with bad behaviour.

# Looking after yourself



It is important to look after your own needs too.



Supporting a child who self-harms can be upsetting, worrying and stressful.



You may feel like you cannot talk to anybody about your child's self-harm because it is private.



But you must get support too if you need it. You can talk to friends, family members or a health professional.

# Should I tell other family members?



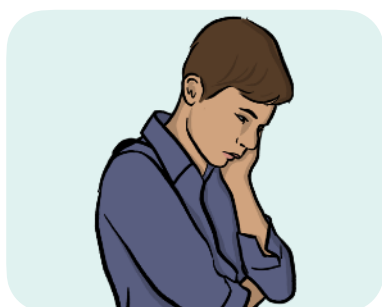
You may need to decide whether to tell other family members about your child's self-harm.



You and your child should make this decision **together**.



You can also decide how much you want to tell other family members.



For example, you could just say your child is having some issues without talking about self-harm.



If you have other children, they will also need your support to understand.



It may be useful to come up with a plan with your child about what to do or say if other family members ask questions.

# How can I help my child's self-harm injuries?



If your child has self-harmed and has an injury, here is what you should do:

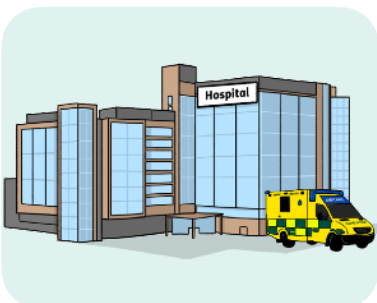
## Overdose



An **overdose** is when you take too much of a medication.



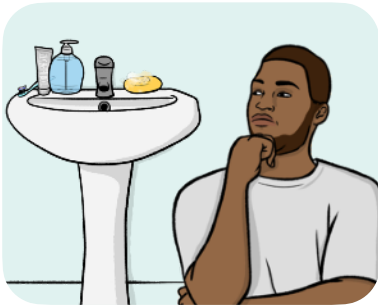
Overdosing is an emergency.



If your child has overdosed, take them to a hospital as soon as possible.



Try to find out what medication they have taken too much of and let hospital staff know.



If your child will not tell you what medication they have taken, look around for empty pill bottles or boxes.

## Cuts



If your child has cut their skin, press down on the bleeding cut with a bandage or tea towel.



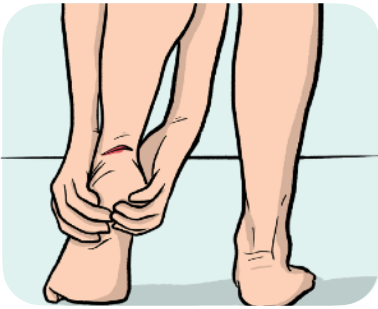
When the bleeding has stopped, clean the cut using tap water.



Then cover the cut with a bandage or thick plaster.



If the cut becomes infected, you should take your child to a doctor.



A cut is infected if it looks very red and swollen and may have a yellow or white liquid coming out of it.

This is called **pus**.

## Burns



If your child has burnt their skin, put the burnt area under cold water for 10 to 30 minutes.

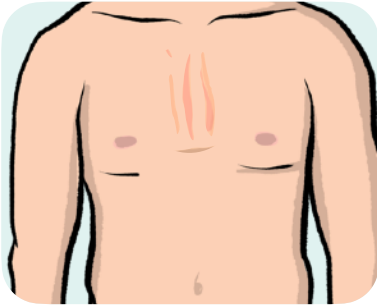


Then cover the area with a bandage or cling film.



Do not put ice or any greasy liquids on the area, like creams or butter.

# Scars



**Scars** are marks left by old self-harm injuries.

If your child has scars that they are embarrassed about, you can help them by:



- Buying products that help scars to fade.



- Buying makeup that can cover the scars.



- Telling them that most scars will fade.



# Where can I get help?

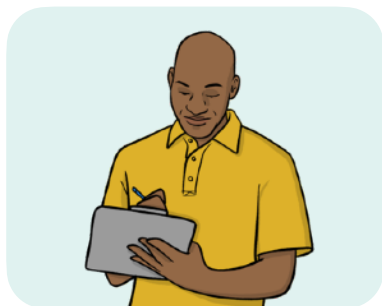


If your child continues to self-harm, or their self-harm starts to become very dangerous, you should get help.

## Your local GP surgery



Your local GP surgery may help you contact your local Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS).



Someone from CAMHS may do an **assessment** with your child.



An **assessment** is when your child will meet with a health professional or social worker to work out what care or support they need.



CAMHS will use what they find out to write a plan for your child's support and treatment.

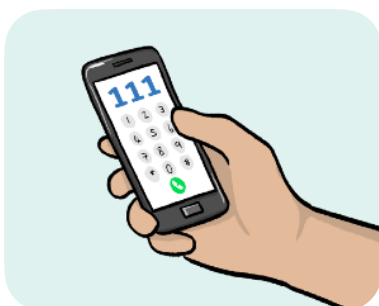
## Emergency help



An **emergency** is when you feel your child's life is in danger.



In an emergency call **999**.

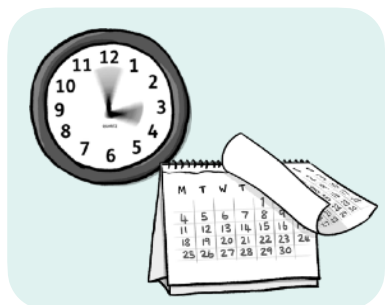


For urgent mental health advice, contact **NHS 111**.

# The Samaritans



**The Samaritans** is a charity that can give you support with any worries you have.



They are open 24 hours a day, every day.



You can find out more about the Samaritans here:

[www.samaritans.org/](http://www.samaritans.org/)



You or your child can also call the Samaritans helpline: 116 123

# CALM



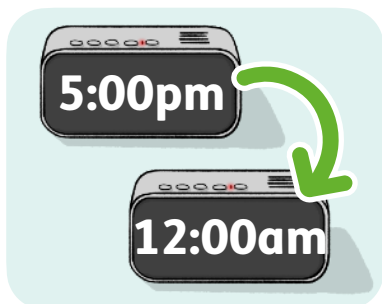
**CALM** is a charity that supports people who are having suicidal thoughts.



You can find out more about CALM here: [www.thecalmzone.net/](http://www.thecalmzone.net/)



You or your child can also call the CALM helpline: 0800 58 58 58



The helpline is open 5:00pm until 12:00am, every day.

# Young Minds

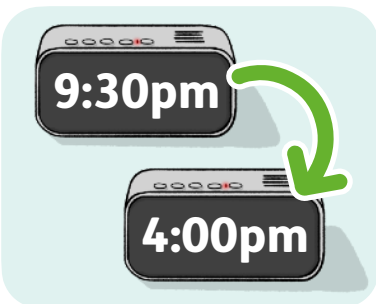
The logo consists of the word "YOUNGMINDS" in a bold, black, sans-serif font, centered within a white rounded rectangle with a thin dark green border.

**YOUNGMINDS**

**Young Minds** is a charity that supports young people who having issues with their mental health.



Young Minds also has a helpline that is just for parents and carers: 0808 802 5544.



The helpline is open 9:30am to 4:00pm, Monday to Friday.



You can also chat with someone from Young Minds online by visiting their website: [www.youngminds.org.uk/parent/parents-helpline/](http://www.youngminds.org.uk/parent/parents-helpline/)

# Hopeline UK



**Hopeline UK** is a helpline for people under the age of 35 who are having suicidal thoughts.



You can find out more about Hopeline UK here: [www.papyrus-uk.org/papyrus-hopeline247/](http://www.papyrus-uk.org/papyrus-hopeline247/)



You or your child can contact Hopeline UK by:

- Calling: 0800 068 4141



- Texting: 88247

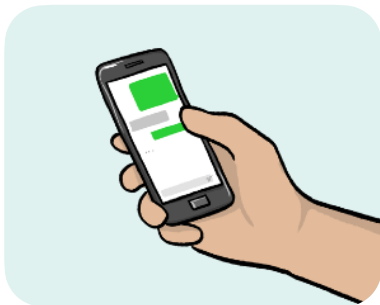


- Emailing: [pat@papyrus-uk.org](mailto:pat@papyrus-uk.org)

# SHOUT



**SHOUT** is a helpline for anyone who needs support.



You or your child can text the SHOUT helpline: 85258

## Helpful websites



There are lots of websites that can give you information about self-harming and how to manage it.



Here are some you could take a look at. Please note that Kooth and Qwell are only available in certain areas:

- [www.kooth.com](http://www.kooth.com)
- [www.qwell.io](http://www.qwell.io)
- [www.sppcm.co.uk](http://www.sppcm.co.uk)
- [www.harmless.org.uk](http://www.harmless.org.uk)
- [www.selfharm.co.uk](http://www.selfharm.co.uk)