



Self-care.

Make sure you look after yourself - eat properly, do some activity and do things that make you feel good.

Keep a diary.

This helps you see your good and bad days, so you can think about what has worked or hasn't worked for you.

My Coping Plan

Self-harm behaviour can often feel like a constant cycle of feelings and behaviours. Try and fill in this blank cycle with your own thoughts and feelings and add some coping strategies, or "exits" to help you plan how you will break the cycle.

Things I can do:

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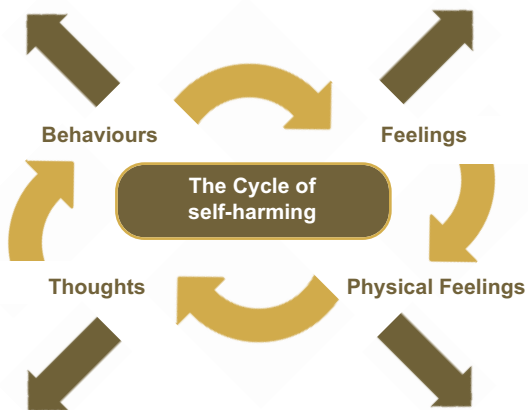
How other people can help me:

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Things I can tell myself:

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Anything else that might help:

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Useful Contacts and Further Information

The Meadows: 0191 301 8554
CAMHS: 0300 123 9296

The following websites offer information and support for young people and their parents and carers in relation to understanding, managing and reducing self-harm behaviours.

Young Minds
<https://youngminds.org.uk/find-help/feelings-and-symptoms/>
Mind
<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/>
NHS
<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/self-harm/>

The National Self Harm Network has a page of useful downloads; including great distraction ideas, first aid information and support resources from other young people- www.nshn.co.uk/downloads.html

Researchers at the University of Oxford have developed a leaflet for Parents and Carers to help understand and support a young person struggling with self-harm behaviours - <https://www.psych.ox.ac.uk/research/csr/research-projects-1/coping-with-self-harm-a-guide-for-parents-and-carers>

What to do about self-harm?

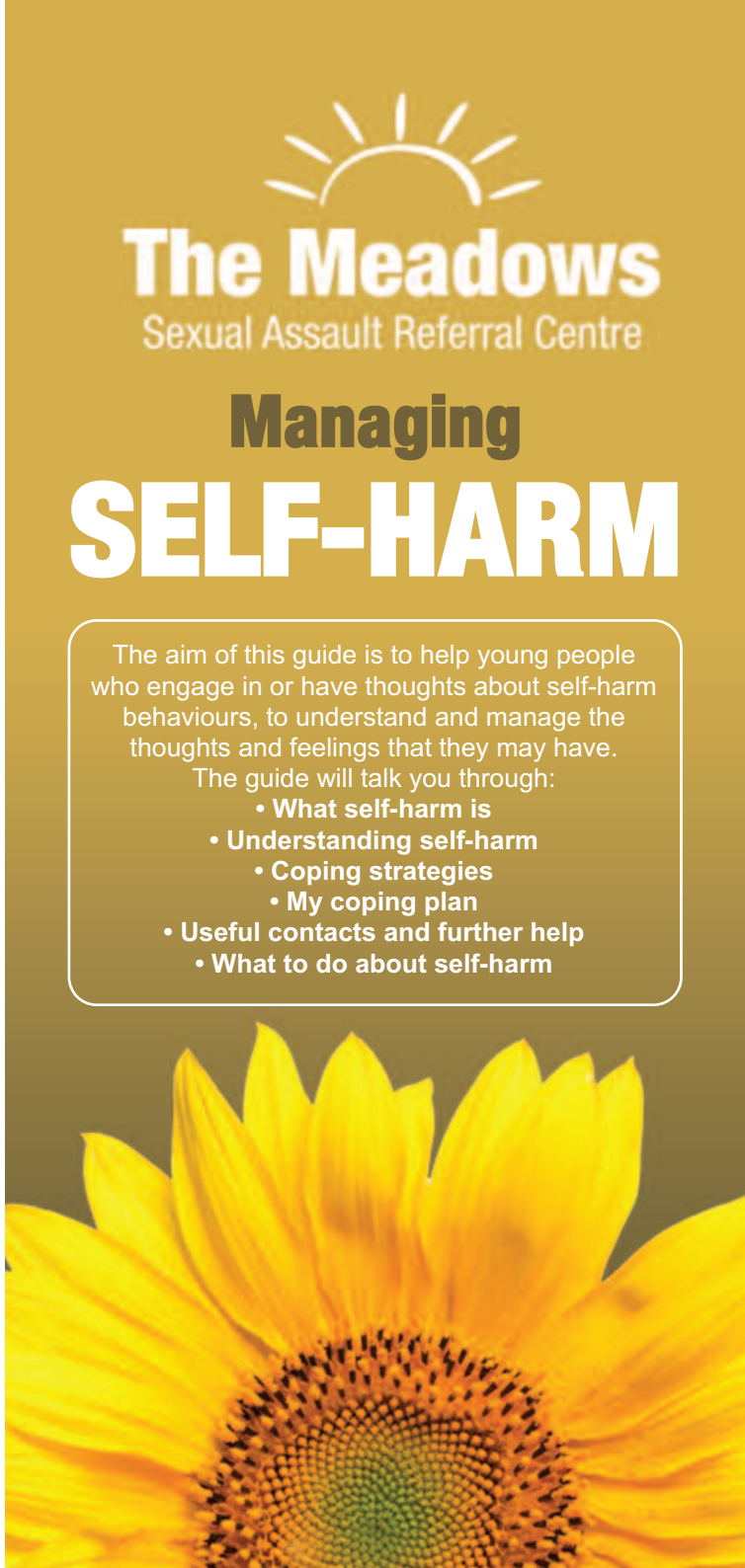
Even though there are always reasons underneath someone hurting themselves, it is important to know that self-harm does carry risks. **Once you have started to depend on self-harm, it can take a long time to stop.**

Self-harm can be a serious problem and depending on the method, self-harm can lead to serious physical damage, including permanent scarring or potentially irreversible medical and internal effects (of an overdose etc). Self-harm could be a sign that you need help with other aspects of your life and without help it may become unmanageable. **It takes courage to ask for support and it is understandable that you may have concerns but if you think you are affected by self-harm you should always talk to someone, a parent or relative you trust, perhaps a teacher or youth worker.** If you don't think you can confide in anyone, talk to your GP. A GP will be trained to support you and can refer you to the right people to help assess and support your needs. You deserve a respectful response from those around you, including medical professionals.

Treating Injuries

You may well need treatment quickly for injuries from self-harming. Any injuries you have should be treated **straight away** and not left because you harmed yourself. Your GP may be able to help and treat your injuries or they may refer you to hospital where you will be treated by a doctor or nurse trained to work with children and young people who self-harm. Some physical injuries may need treating in an accident and emergency department (A&E), minor injuries unit or walk-in center.

Do not hesitate to tell someone or call an ambulance if your injury is serious, out of your control or you have taken an overdose.



Managing SELF-HARM

The aim of this guide is to help young people who engage in or have thoughts about self-harm behaviours, to understand and manage the thoughts and feelings that they may have.

The guide will talk you through:

- What self-harm is
- Understanding self-harm
- Coping strategies
- My coping plan
- Useful contacts and further help
- What to do about self-harm

What do we mean when we talk about Self-harm?



Self-harm is any behaviour done to hurt yourself on purpose. **It's usually used as a way of coping with, or expressing overwhelming and difficult feelings, painful memories and emotional distress.**

It is a very common behaviour in young people and affects around 1 in 12 people. Self-harm is something that anyone can do - there is no one typical person who hurts themselves and there are no fixed rules about why people self-harm.

Self-harm can be a response to a current or past situation or feelings you're having. When you have had a traumatic experience, it can be something you do as a way of trying to cope.

Understanding self-harm

Anyone can self-harm and there are many reasons why someone might engage in self-harm, though it is usually associated with difficult experiences and is usually as a result of another problem. Self-harm often occurs when you feel you don't have any other way of dealing with these issues.

Individual experiences could include depression, anxiety, bullying or low self-esteem. If something bad has happened, self-harm may occur or increase. Similarly, social factors are common in young people, such as difficult peer relationships or bullying, friends who self-harm, social media and internet influences, academic pressures, difficult relationships or abuse.

Some people may make comments about self-harm that can leave you feeling judged and alone.



If you do self-harm as a way of asking for help or bringing attention to yourself, remember that there is nothing wrong with wanting to be noticed and to have your distress acknowledged and taken seriously. It is common for someone to feel as though no-one understands why you self-harm, but lots more people today know about what the condition really means. Self-harming can provide a short-term sense of release, but it is unlikely that the cause of your distress will have gone away. Self-harm itself can cause difficult emotions to deal with and could make you feel worse.



The Stress Bucket



The stress bucket represents our ability to cope with stress; the water level is our stress levels.

Many things, big and small, contribute to our buckets daily; including emotional stress, academic stress, our home and school life, our environment, relationships with friends, family or partners, social media and traumatic life events.

Sometimes we may develop unhelpful coping strategies, such as self-harm or substance use, which may provide short term relief but causes much more trouble in the long run and only contributes more stress to our buckets!

The more demand or 'stressors' we experience, the higher the water level gets. Eventually the bucket will overflow, especially if we don't have any good coping strategies, and we cannot manage anymore.

We can reduce our stress by developing coping strategies that build our resilience and skills to deal with these stressors. This allows some of our water or 'stress' to drain out safely and stops us reaching our overflow level!

Coping Strategies

Some coping strategies will work better for you at different times, depending on your current levels of stress and emotional health. Having many different coping strategies to try and knowing a few you like to use will help you gain more control and support you to stop using negative and unhelpful behaviours.

Learning to recognise your triggers for self-harm (what gives you the urge to harm yourself) is key in developing good and useful strategies to use instead. These can be anything from people, places, thoughts or smells and noises. If you can recognise your triggers, and how they make you feel, you can start to develop the right distractions, to use at the right time, to reduce your urge to self-harm.

Distraction techniques.

Distraction techniques help you focus on the here and now and this is the main way people help themselves when they want to avoid self-harm. Different distractions work for different people, and the same distraction won't necessarily work for you every time, so it's important that you have a few different strategies to choose from. Counting how many shapes you see in a room, putting on music that makes you happy, having a bath or shower, squeezing ice cubes or doing some exercise are all examples of appropriate distractions. Talking to people you trust can help remind you that you are safe and cared for. It can be good to tell people about how you are feeling, so they can help you. Doing some relaxation techniques can also help. Things like deep breathing, listening to relaxing music or looking at a relaxing image. You might want to ask a family member to help you.

Coping cards.

If you find it hard to tell people what you are feeling, make up some cards to help. These could say things like "I feel really upset" or "I'd like you to give me some time alone" or "please will you distract me?"

Don't try and push your thoughts away.

Imagine your mind is like a wardrobe. If you just shove things into it and slam the door, what will happen? At some point, your clothes will come spilling out. Therapy can help you organise the thoughts better, and "put them away" in your memory so you have more control over them.

