

What is Self-Harm?

Self-harm is where someone does something to deliberately hurt themselves when they find things difficult to cope with. It can include things like:

- Cutting
- Overdosing (self-poisoning)
- Hitting (self and others)
- Burning or scalding
- Picking or scratching skin
- Pulling hair
- Ingesting toxic substances (like bleach)
- Eating disorders

Who does it?

There is not one type of person who self-harms. It does not depend on sex, age, religion or background. Both sexes self-harm, but their methods may be different, for example males may engage in behaviours such as fighting. **Both adults and young people can self-harm.** LGBTQ young people, those who have been abused or witnessed Domestic Violence, have been in care/ adopted, identify as emo, been bullied or experienced parental substance misuse are potentially more at risk of self-harm or other mental health concerns.

Why do they do it?

People self-harm for a number of reasons. Something might have happened to make them feel bad about things. This could be stress or anxiety, friendship or relationship difficulties, isolation or loneliness, low self-esteem, questioning sexuality or gender. **But often there is no known cause or trigger.**

Someone has told me they are hurting themselves; what should I do?

Do

- Offer your friend a kind smile or hug, and ask “what can I do to help?”
- Listen to your friend
- React calmly and be reassuring and supportive
- Let your friend know they aren’t alone
- Encourage them to ask for help from an adult, and look up ideas for support and information online together
- Ensure they get medical attention if this is needed
- Make sure you find someone to talk to who can support you

Don't

- Be judgmental
- Be dismissive of their problems
- Tell them to stop
- Panic
- Feel it is your responsibility to make things better
- Promise to keep this a secret—if you feel your friend is unsafe, tell a trusted adult. This is to keep your friend safe so they can get the help they need