

Where can I get further help?

If you self-harm regularly or want to talk to someone about it, make an appointment to see your GP or take a look at the Trust's website to see what services we offer and contact details. If you cannot get online please contact our Customer Services team on 0800 587 2108 for more details

Website – www.southwestyorkshire.nhs.uk

Follow us on Twitter to get updates on what we're doing: [@allofusinmind](https://twitter.com/allofusinmind)

Like us on Facebook for the latest local health news, information and events: search for [allofusinmind](https://www.facebook.com/allofusinmind)

Booklets available in this series:

- Anger – How do I manage it?
- Baby Blues – How can I best deal with them?
- Bereavement – How can I cope?
- Confidence – How can I get some?
- Healthy Living – What should I do?
- Healthy Sex – How can I be sure?
- Low Moods – How can I feel better?
- My body, my health – Check it out!
- Pain – What can I do to help myself?
- Shyness – How can I manage it?
- Sleep – How can I get some?
- Stress – How do I manage it?
- The end of life – How can I prepare for it?
- Worries – How can I best deal with them?

Your feedback is welcome

We invite you to share any comments, compliments, concerns or complaints you have about the Trust. Please speak to a member of staff or contact our customers services team on 0800 587 2108, who can also provide help in understanding this information, including in other formats.



Sometimes your thoughts and feelings can make you feel overwhelmed and lead you to express your frustration and emotions through self-harm. You may self-harm but don't know why you do it. This can be a very confusing time and this booklet should help make things a bit clearer and give you information on how to keep yourself safe.

We want you to find this booklet helpful; however it is not intended to be used as a direct substitute for a consultation with a healthcare professional, such as your GP.

Some examples of self-harm include:

- Cutting your skin.
- Scratching or picking your skin.
- Burning your skin.
- Hitting or punching yourself.
- Pulling out your hair or eyelashes.
- Swallowing things you know are poisonous.
- Taking an overdose of tablets or medicines.
- Banging yourself against objects.

It is only when these things are done on purpose that it is considered self-harm.

Self-harming is very common and can occur at any age. Self-harm may help you to feel in control, reduce uncomfortable feelings or make you feel less tense. It can be used as a way of punishment or as a release.

Help and advice from health professionals should be sought in all cases of self-harming. Alongside this professional help, here are some steps you can take to help yourself.

Step one: Take action

If you think that a friend or a relative might be self-harming, try to look out for any of the following:

- Signs of excessive alcohol or drug use.
- Not speaking to others and becoming more secluded.
- Being fully covered at all times, even in hot weather.
- Signs of low mood, lack of motivation or tearfulness.
- Signs they have been pulling out their hair.
- Any bruises, cuts or cigarette burns.
- Changes in eating habits such as any unusual weight gain or weight loss.
- Signs of low self-esteem.

“ I don't feel in control of things that happen around me. I choose when and how much I hurt myself and that makes me feel back in control ”

Step two: Think about what happens when you self-harm

Keep a diary for two weeks. You can keep a record of how you're feeling on the 'notes' page at the end of this booklet, either for yourself or to speak to someone about. Include information such as:

- What the situation was - what was going on to make you feel the need to harm yourself?
- How it made you feel.
- What you did.

Use this diary to help yourself identify specific thoughts. Look at each negative thought and think about what you could have done differently. This can help you to think and understand why you self-harm.

Writing things down can help you to start looking at your thoughts and feelings in more detail than you may have done before. It is normal to feel anxious about this and you may find it useful to speak with a healthcare professional about it before you continue.

““ *I don't really know why I self-harm, I'm so confused* ””

““ *Sometimes I don't exist and the pain from hurting myself brings me back to reality* ””

Step three: Take action

Talk to someone

Speak to a loved one or someone you trust. Family and friends can help to ease your troubles and help you see things in a different way. Having a conversation is sometimes enough to stop the urge to self-harm and can help to relieve stress.

If you are with someone that is making you feel worse, remove yourself from the situation. Removing yourself gives you time to put things into perspective.

Distract yourself

Distract yourself by stopping what you're doing. Wherever you are, try to be mindful and appreciate what is around you.

Being mindful and noticing what is going on around you will take your mind to a more peaceful state. This will help you to focus on things other than self-harming.

Breathe

If you feel overwhelmed or anxious, focus on breathing slowly.

Close your eyes and think about a place that is safe and positive to you, such as a favourite holiday destination. This will help you to relax, put your feelings into context and ease your anxiety.

Be healthy

Keep yourself healthy. Don't rely on caffeine, alcohol, or drugs to cope – these things may seem to help short term but will ultimately create long-term problems. Instead, try speaking to your GP, friends or family to find the reasons why you self-harm.

Exercise is a great way to bring down your everyday stress levels and help to improve your overall wellbeing. It doesn't have to be difficult – try stretching, walking or swimming.

Why not read our booklet, "Healthy living – What should I do?" available on our website – www.swyt.co/selfhelpguides for ideas.

Be creative

Writing, making music, dancing or painting can be a great way to ease tension and help you express how you feel inside.

If you're wondering where to start, see if there are any local art or music groups that you can join. Take a look at the Trust's Creative Minds initiative – which supports local creative projects that you may be able to join. Visit www.creativemindsuk.com to find out more or see if your local council is running any projects.

“ It feels like I am screaming inside
and the only way I can
make it stop is to hurt myself ”

Be positive

Try to write down three things that you are grateful for every evening. Try to see problems as challenges and face them in a positive and proactive way.

Accept the things that you cannot change, as these will only hold you back.

Find a different way

There are a number of safe methods you can use to reduce your urge to self-harm. You could try:

- Squeezing an ice cube. If the sight of blood is important to you, try making them with red fruit juice.
- Drawing lines on your skin with red pen.
- Having a cold shower.

These methods limit the risk of injury to your body and can help to control your need to self-harm.

Support groups

Join a local support group. This will introduce you to other people who are going through the same things as you and introduce skills to help you overcome harming yourself. You can ask a friend or family member to go with you if you don't want to go alone.

Step four: Talk to a healthcare professional

Try to confide in your family, friends or someone you trust. If you self-harm regularly, make an appointment to see your GP.

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