



Information and resource pack for young people who Self Harm



What is self harm?

Everyday we encounter a number of thoughts, feelings and emotions. Sometimes there are situations in our lives that make these thoughts, feelings and emotions negative and at times distressing. These situations could be linked to difficulties in family life, upsetting relationships, troubled friendships, exam stress, and bullying behaviour, among others.



Being able to show how we feel, share our thoughts, express emotions and talk about things that are troubling us is not always easy. Holding in powerful thoughts, feelings and emotions such as guilt, anger, frustration, and self hate can be too much to bear. At times people may turn to themselves and their own bodies to express how they feel. This is usually called self harm which means anything we do to ourselves knowing it could cause damage and pain. It is often impulsive and done without too much thought. Self harm can become a way for people to cope with things that are happening and how those things make them feel. . Self-harming will only ever be a temporary solution to the emotions you are feeling and it can become a negative cycle. That is why it is so important to get help as soon as you can.

A PROBLEM SHARED IS
A PROBLEM HALVED

- PROVERB

Getting help



Talking to someone can really help but it can be very hard to do. If the things we need to say are very personal or scary it can be difficult to find someone we trust. Friends can be good to talk to but at times it is easier to talk to someone who is less personally involved in your life. Teachers, G.P's and counsellors can be good sources of support. Talking isn't the only way to say what you want to say and you could consider writing things down. People may not be able to keep everything you tell them confidential, if they feel you are a danger to yourself or to others, they may have to share the information with others.. Try not to let this put you off approaching them though as sometimes just starting a little general conversation can make you more confident to say more or approach other people you trust.

If you don't feel ready to talk then there are other ways through which you could express how you feel such as writing a diary, creative writing, poetry or art. You could also write about how you feel in an online forum, such as www.nshn.co.uk/forum

Here you can be anonymous and share exactly how you feel and what you are thinking in a safe environment with people who understand and that may be going through the same as you.



Who can help?

Please talk to someone about your feelings. Your doctor, a school nurse or a trusted adult can help you find the right person to speak to. You can also talk to your school counsellor or a teacher for further support.

- Text your school nurse - for helpful and confidential advice, young people aged between 11-19 can text their Public Health Practitioner (school nurse) on 07507 329952
 - KOOTH on-line counselling is a free counselling service which is accessible to young people aged 11-25 living within Nottinghamshire www.kooth.com
 - Papyrus provide confidential help and advice to young people to prevent suicide www.papyrus.co.uk or 0870 170 4000
 - Calm Harm APP - This App provides tasks that help support you to resist or manage the urge to self-harm. You can add your own tasks too and it's completely private and password protected www.stem4.org.uk
 - Young Minds www.youngminds.org.uk 0808 8025544
 - Child line 0800 1111
 - Samaritans 116 123 www.samaritans.org
 - www.healthforteens.co.uk has specific guidance on self-harm
 - The National Self-harm Network campaigns for the rights and understanding of people who self-harm. Provides free information packs to users of the service. www.nshn.co.uk
- Samaritans, tel: 08457 909090, website: www.samaritans.org
NSPCC, tel: 0808 800 5000, website: www.nspcc.org.uk



NSPCC

SAMARITANS

Alternative Coping Strategies:

There are other ways to cope and other ways to express thoughts, feelings and emotions that are healthier and more effective. Whilst the urges to self harm can be very strong distracting yourself from these thoughts can help to keep you occupied whilst the strong feelings pass. Here are a few ideas that might help.

<p>Distraction Techniques</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cleaning or tidying • Washing clothes • Playing games – cards/board games/ computer • Sports / exercise – walking/running/dance – exercise releases endorphins and can reduce anxiety • Gardening • Visiting, text or phoning a friend • Painting and drawing pictures/posters/cards • Writing letters • Puzzles which take brain power and divert you • Watching TV/DVD • Listening to music/Walkman • Going out – cinema or shopping • Get creative – sewing, knitting, collecting • Grab a balloon and blow! When you want to self-harm, blow up the balloon and by the time you have, the urge to self-harm may have passed 	<p>Comforting Techniques</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold a safe object • Sit in a safe place • Listen to soothing music • Sing favourite songs • Use perfume/hand cream • Spray room with fragrance • Use potpourri • Buy fresh flowers • Eat a favourite food or have a soothing drink • Have a bubble bath or soak your feet • Change the sheets on your bed • Stroke your pet • Wear comfortable clothes • Hug someone • Put lights on (to sleep) • Headphones – you don't need to attach them to anything, but can wear them if you don't want to be disturbed or you want to look pre-occupied or use them to listen to some music or a podcast
<p>Positive Emotional Techniques</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read old letters • Look through old photos • Listen to emotional music • Watch funny/heart-warming film • Read a joke book • Say positive statements to self • Make an emergency bundle • Read your list of assets or strengths • Self-voice tape or cards to remember that times have been better before and will be again 	<p>Emotional Focusing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • List emotional triggers • Write poetry/prose regarding feelings • Paint/draw about emotions • Think about keeping a diary – you don't have to share this with anyone, but it may help you to recognise when and why you self-harm and when you don't • Discuss feelings with another person – family, friend or adult at school • Access the on-line help or counselling services yourself
<p>Relaxation Techniques</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus solely on breathing/breathe deeply. Try the <i>Belly Bio</i> app and focus on your breathing • Focus on the position of your body • Relax each muscle individually • Listen to relaxation music • Listen to guided relaxation on tape • Meditation • Yoga • Massage hands, feet, head etc. Try relaxation techniques like yoga or meditation. These can help you get control of your feelings. 	<p>Alternative 'Safer' Forms of Self-Harm</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold ice in hand or rub ice on the skin where you might usually cut • Use a pencil or pen for drawing on skin it looks like scratch marks, but isn't permanent • Squeeze rubber ball • Listen to loud music • Rubber band on wrist – to snap when you have the urge to self-harm • Throw things/scream, punch cushions (in a safe space) • Stand under hot/cold shower • Snap/break sticks

Hope Box

It can be helpful to think of the positive things about you and your life. You can make a hope box to help you to do this. In your hope box you can store things that make you feel better such as photo's, nice comments from people or cards.

Distractions that can help

Here are some distractions that have helped other young people, have a look through to get some ideas of what may help you.

Do something PHYSICAL

Exercise for a release of endorphins
and the feel good factor
Punch a pillow
Go for a walk

Concentrate on something else

Squeezing ice cubes
Count anything: wallpaper
patterns, bricks on a wall,
ceiling tiles

Do something FUN

Playing computer games,
games on phone
Listen to music
Watch a comedy or funny clip
Bake or cook something tasty

Do something with others

Hang out with friends and family
Invite a friend round
Speak to a friend, family member
or someone you trust
Phone a helpline Samaritans 0845 7909090.
Child line 0800 111

Set yourself a TARGET

Set yourself a 2 minute rule where you
try not to harm yourself in this time,
after 2 minutes try for 3 minutes then,
4, 5 and so on. See how many minutes
you can go

Do something CREATIVE

Doodling or scribbling on paper
Painting your nails
Write negative feelings on paper then
rip them up

Do something that gives you COMFORT

Have a relaxing bath
Cuddling a soft toy/pillow
Sleeping
Playing with a pet

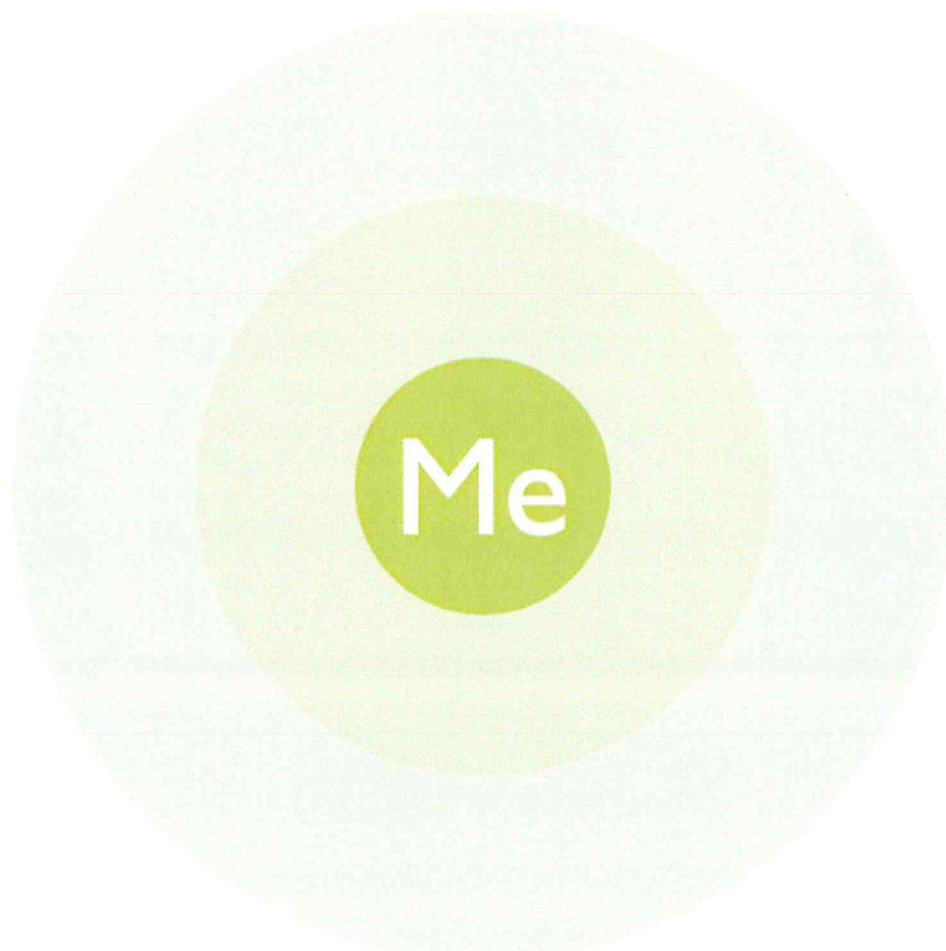
Do something CONSTRUCTIVE

Writing a list of positive
things in your life
Forward planning -
concentrate on something in
the future, like a holiday

This is a relationship circle. At the centre is you. The next ring holds your family and closest friends. The outer circle holds people who are also regularly in your life like teachers and peers you know less well but who you might see at clubs etc. Outside the circle is a whole host of organisations and sources of support which exist both locally, nationally and on-line. Look at appendix 2a for sources of support and add the ones you think you might want to explore more.

Try and think about people and things that support you. Add them to the circle and write what they can do to help. Think carefully about what you do to help yourself already.

Try and identify someone who you can talk to in circle 1 or 2 and who can check in with you.



Creating a safe space

1

Imagine you are creating a perfect space for yourself, where you could go to feel peaceful, calm, and positive.

2

What are you imagining? Is this something you could create, even if it's just a few of the things you imagined?

3

When you are upset it may not be possible to go to an actual place, but you can create a place in your mind that will help you feel safer, calmer and more in control. Think about using all your senses to create this - visual images, sound, smell, taste and touch.

The more senses you use the better it will feel

Creating a Safe Kit:

An actual box or bag which contains things that help i.e. a list of people to call, distraction techniques, soothing music, your favourite scent, photographs...

Guided imagery:

You are outside in a beautiful forest. Look around you, and visualise your surroundings. The sky is a beautiful cloudless blue-or maybe it has the soft multicoloured hues of sunrise or sunset. Notice the colours of the trees or the grass. Maybe there's a creek running through your forest, and you can hear the gentle splashing of water as it tumbles over well-worn rocks. Birds are chirping in the distance, telling you that your forest is safe. You continue to breathe deeply. Perhaps the sharp scent of pine stimulates your senses, or maybe you get the sweeter tones of meadow grass and wild flowers. Breathe in the gentle aromas that surround you in your safe space. You begin to wander, noticing the features of your landscape. Build every detail in your mind. Copses of trees, groups of boulders, maybe even a cottage in the distance or a simple hammock where you can rest. Grow your safe space until it encompasses you and all of your fears and anxieties. Walk around your safe space until you have explored as much of it as you want to.

Continue walking until you find your perfect place-the place that makes you feel most at peace. Visualise yourself sitting here, in this place, and begin to breathe.

Inhale for 1...2...3, Exhale for 1...2...3, Surround yourself with feelings of peace and safety.

Inhale for 1...2...3...4...5...6, Exhale for 1...2...3...4...5...6, Know that you can come to this place whenever you're feeling overwhelmed and anxious.

When you're ready to leave your safe space, slowly open your eyes and come back into the room. Hold onto those feelings of peace and safety, and know that you can revisit them whenever you need to.

My Plan: Looking after myself

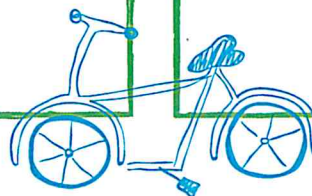
When I feel...

And have thoughts like...

I can... (distractions/coping strategies/what takes my mind off things?)

I am not alone and can contact my supporters who are... (hint: look back at page 3 'My Supporters')

I could take myself to or ask someone to come with me to...



5 senses to help you right now

A mindfulness activity to help you stay connected in the 'here and now'.

5

Things that I can see right now or imagine I can see right now

Look around you, notice colours, shapes, textures, movement, light and shadows.

4

Things that I can hear right now or imagine I can hear right now

Notice sounds that are near and far, loud or quiet, sounds from your body, in the room, outside.

3

Things that I can touch right now or imagine I can touch right now

Reach out around you, what's there and what does it feel like?

2

Things that I can smell or taste right now or imagine I can taste right now

Imagine your favourite smell or taste. Notice the smells around you right now; fresh air, books, clothes.

1

Take one deep slow breath

Simply focus on your breathing. In this moment. Right now.

Think about and remind myself of how my positives can make me feel better, write 3 positives about me/my life.

Things I look forward to and why:

It is important for you to look after yourself to help you cope with difficulties, be happy and feel well. Check out these ideas for looking after yourself:

Be active

Have at least
8 hours sleep a
night

Be with other
people

Go to school /
college

Eat a balanced diet

Help others

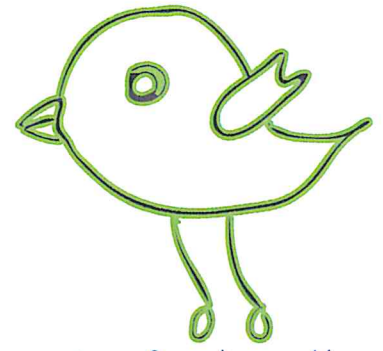
Get involved with groups
and activities

Have a hobby

Take time out/
relaxing

Worry Time

Limiting the time you spend worrying



Anxious people tend to spend much of their time worrying. Sometimes they worry to the point that they find it very hard to 'switch off' and relax. If we can reduce the amount of time we spend worrying, we can reduce our anxiety levels. One way you can do this is to assign 'worry time'.

'Worry time' Involves setting aside between fifteen and twenty minutes each day that you will allow yourself to worry. Any worries that pop into your head outside of 'worry time' should simply be noted and forgot about until when you try to resolve them during your 'worry time'. That way you will be free to carry on your day without the worries.

Then - when your 'worry time' arrives, you should allow yourself to think about the things that have been worrying you that day and try to resolve them.

'Worry time' helps to reduce the time you spend worrying, and also proves that you can have more control over your worries. It may also help you see that many worries resolved themselves or simple seem less important over time.

Remember, it is usually not possible to resolve every single worry or problem that you have. So if something is outside your control (or has already happened), try not to worry as you have done all you can. There is also the possibility that your worry won't even come true in the first place.



Worry time – so what do I do?

Decide a time in the day that you will have your 'worry time'.

At other times, simply note down any worries that pop into your head and try to forget about them. Close your eyes and imagine putting your worry in a strong box and locking it away and then keep yourself busy with something else.

When 'worry time' arrives, time yourself for 15–20 minutes to allow yourself to 'worry'. (Don't overrun!)

During worry time, try to resolve your worries proactively. Simply try to come up with solutions to your worries if possible. Using a pen and pad to jot down solutions can be helpful.

Stop as soon as your 'worry time' is finished. If any worries still feel unresolved, simply carry them over to tomorrow's 'worry time'.

Here are some handy hints to help you with your worry time

If you find it difficult to switch off from all of your worries during the day, don't fret, as this should improve with time and practice.

It may be useful to use the problem solving section in this guide during 'worry time'.

When it comes to 'worry time', feel free to cut it short if you have resolved all of your worries early.

Often things that have worried us at one point in the day seem less worrying when we re-visit them during 'worry time'. If this happens 'great!' simply forget about them.

It may help to spend worry time with someone you trust that can help you (parent, carer, older brother or sister).

Positive affirmations

We can get into the habit of thinking negatively about ourselves and situations. Using positive statements can help us to develop new attitudes and ways of thinking about ourselves and our situations.

Positive Statements:

Think of 'I' statements such as:

I am Brave	I have meaning and purpose in my life
I am Kind	I am strong
I am unique and special	I am calm and confident
I am intelligent	I am thoughtful
I am funny	I am good at...
I am happy	I am beautiful
I have a lot to be proud of	I am in control of my life
I am capable	I am honest
I am friendly	I can achieve
I am healthy and have all that I need	I can cope
I am creative	I am a good and worthwhile person

Choose a statement from the list or one that means more to you and then: Repeat it, Repeat it and Repeat it, through the day, throughout the week and throughout every month.

It may help to write your positive statement down and carry it with you or make a poster that you will see every day which helps you focus and think of your positive statement.

When you have a negative thought, think about your positive statement (you could say it out loud, look at it or say it over in your mind). The more often you practice this the more helpful it will be.