

SELF-HARM

INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

What is self harm?

Self-harm means intentionally injuring yourself (e.g., cutting, burning, scratching) as a way to release emotional pain, stress, or feelings you can't deal with.

Self-harm can also include risky behavior, such as driving recklessly, drinking, or using drugs.

CONSEQUENCES OF SELF-HARM

Self-harm can result in a temporary feeling of relief from emotional pain; however, self-harm can be very dangerous.

Here are just a few consequences of self-harm.

Continued emotional pain. The emotional relief from self-harm doesn't last, which can make the emotional pain seem even worse.

Unintentional injury. Minor injuries can turn into major ones, even if you don't mean them to.

Isolation. Those who self-harm often go to great lengths to hide it. This can make you feel isolated and make emotional issues worse.

Risk of addiction. Like many dangerous behaviors, self-harm can become addicting. Doing it once in a while can turn into a frequent behavior, especially if the main cause of the emotional distress is not addressed.

If you have self-harmed or are aware of someone who has, know that there are ways to stop, and much better ways to cope with emotional stress.

The following strategies are safer, healthier ways to deal with emotional distress and trauma.

Confide in someone. If your emotions are so big or unmanageable that you feel the need to harm yourself, get help. Talk to a parent, friend, counselor, or someone you trust. You don't have to go through the pain alone. There are people who want to help you.

Identify triggers. When you identify what it is that makes you want to harm yourself (e.g., anger, anxiety, feeling numb), you can better identify the "urge" that happens before self-harming. You can then choose to satisfy that urge with something healthier.

Find healthy ways to cope that work for you.

- ▶ Listen to music.
- ▶ Exercise vigorously: run, jump, or punch a punching bag.
- ▶ Write your feelings down in a journal.
- ▶ Take a cold or hot shower.
- ▶ Scream into a pillow.
- ▶ Breathe slowly. Focus on how each breath feels.
- ▶ Call a friend.
- ▶ Use the **Calm Harm** app. This app helps users cope with wanting to self-harm.

For additional information and help, go to selfinjury.com, call the Safe Alternatives Help-line at 1-800-366-8288, or text START to 741741. *Asking for help is a sign of strength.*

If you or someone you know is having thoughts of suicide, the National Suicide Prevention Hotline is available to help: 1-800-273-8255. You can also chat online at suicidepreventionlifeline.org.