

Self-harm

Information for friends



UNIVERSITY OF
CHICHESTER

STUDENT SUPPORT
AND WELLBEING

Contents

Understanding self-harm	1
Advice for friends	4
Do's and Don'ts	6
Further tips.....	8
Pull-out self-help guide	between pages 8 and 9
Ideas to help.....	9
University support.....	11
Student Support and Wellbeing Services	12
Other local support	14
Websites and text/help lines.....	15

This booklet is based on the 'Talking About Self Harm' mini-guide which was originally researched and written by volunteers from award-winning youth project **Right Here Brighton and Hove** and has been adapted for use by the University of Chichester

<https://e-wellbeing.co.uk/sh-resources>

Cover artwork by
Amanda Cochran
amandacochran.com



Understanding Self-harm

It can be a very lonely place to be in when you're self-harming, but it is more common than you may realise.

A lot of people think self-harm is either cutting and/or overdosing but a lot of things done in excess could be seen as self-harm. Examples of these are: getting drunk, doing drugs, smoking, getting into fights and getting tattoos or piercings. There are also less obvious things such as rubbing skin, digging your nails into yourself or pinching yourself.

If you're concerned that any of the above applies to you, a friend or family member, please don't panic!

Self-harm can be a strategy people use to cope with what's going on in their life. It is usually a sign that they are having a tough time and need support.

There are lots of services that can help - here at the University or locally and nationally (see our support sections on pages 11 to 16). These services won't force the person to stop, but they will encourage and support them deal with the issues in their own way.

There are also lots of resources online with all sorts of help and advice, forums for sharing and strategies for distracting and finding alternative methods of coping (see our websites and phonelines section on pages 15 and 16).

Why do people self-harm?

Everyone has problems during their life, and self-harm can affect **anyone**.

Self-harm may be used as a **coping mechanism**, and it is a **myth that self-harm is always a sign of suicidal behaviour**.

Some underlying issues can lead to young people harming themselves. If you combine any of these triggers with the pressures that young people face, it's not surprising that it can be a difficult time.

- Struggling with **difficult thoughts, feelings and emotions**, or maybe feeling overwhelmed
- Problems with **family, friends or relationships**
- **Stress** (specifically exams and academic achievement)
- **Abuse** (emotional, physical, sexual or neglect)
- Being **bullied** (many different types including cyber bullying)
- **Self image** issues

When someone is struggling to cope or to tell someone else how they are feeling, self-harm can be a way of dealing with - and expressing - difficult feelings.

For some people, it can lead to a **sense of control or emotional release**.

Some people may not understand or know why they self-harm, and that's okay. It's still important to get help.

"Let's get one thing straight right here: self-harm doesn't feel nice, it just sometimes feels better than the emotional pain it's trying to hide. In reality, it doesn't even do that; not really. Self-harm isn't nice, the person you care about isn't hurting themselves because it feels good, whatever they may say."

Quote from:

www.selfharm.co.uk/get-information/the-myths/they-must-enjoy-it

Advice for friends

If your friend tells you they are self-harming you may find it daunting and quite overwhelming, especially if it's someone you care about and want to protect. But try to remember - just by telling you they are taking a positive step, however awful it may feel at the time.

The most important thing is to listen to them without judging them or being critical. This can be very hard if you are upset yourself - and perhaps angry - about what they are doing.

You might fear for your friend, worry about what to do for the best. Your friend may tell you but want you to keep it a secret. This can leave you feeling distressed and isolated, with no-one to talk to yourself.

Working out what to do, or trying to decide how much danger your friend is in, is not easy. Try one of the places to go for further help that is listed in this booklet such as one of the Student Support and Wellbeing services listed on page 12. It may also be helpful to find a staff member that you trust and believe you can confide in.

You might also find this webpage helpful:

www.wikihow.com/Help-Someone-Who-Self-Injures

When talking to others about their self-harm...

It's helpful to be aware that self-harm is likely to be a coping mechanism they've developed to help cope with and manage emotions.

We understand it's not an easy subject to broach but it's so important to give people a chance to talk about what they're doing - and more importantly why they're doing it.

It's really key to **listen, take them seriously**, and be as **open-minded** and as **non-judgemental** as possible whilst someone is disclosing their self-harm to you or talking about their feelings or what's going on for them.

Probably the **key thing** to focus on (as long as they don't need immediate medical attention) is **why they're self-harming**.

What if you think someone is self-harming but they won't talk about it?

This can be very difficult. It is often best to discuss how the person is feeling and explain that you have noticed changes in their behaviour, rather than asking straight out. Self-harm can be a difficult subject to introduce, so take it slowly.

Do

- Call the University 24/7 emergency number **01243 816363** if your friend needs first aid or **999** for emergency treatment; tell them you are doing this.
- Be sensible if you help your friend dress their wounds and wear gloves. First aid packs and advice and support can be obtained from the Nurse Health Advisers (map on page 13).
- Listen and support them by letting them know it's okay to feel what they're feeling.
- Focus on what's causing them to self-harm rather than the self-harm in itself.
- Talk to them when they feel like self-harming. Try to understand their feelings, and then move the conversation onto other things.
- Encourage them to keep themselves safe by taking sensible precautions like using clean equipment and having first aid kits available.
- Take some of the mystery out of self-harm by helping them find out about it, perhaps by showing them this guide, or by using the internet.
- Find out about getting help - maybe go with them to see someone, such a member of Student Support and Wellbeing. Have a look at the 'Ideas to help' section on page 9.

- Help them to think about their self-harm not as a shameful secret, but as a problem to be sorted out.
- Make sure you talk to someone you can trust so you get some support. You can find confidential support and advice with Student Support and Wellbeing, see page 12.

Don't

- Try and come up with a solution or try to be their therapist – therapy is complicated and you have enough to deal with as their friend.
- Expect them to stop overnight – it's difficult and takes time and effort.
- React strongly, with anger, hurt, or upset - this is likely to make them feel worse. You can talk honestly about the effect it has on you, but do this calmly and in a way that shows how much you care for them.
- Try to force someone to stop self-harming, it's better to walk away and suggest they come and talk to you about it.
- Make them promise not to do it again.
- Say that you won't see them unless they stop self-harming.
- Feel responsible for their self-harm or become the person who is supposed to stop them. You must get on with your own life as well.

Further tips

- Be open and honest. If you are worried about your friend's safety, you should tell a member of staff. Let your friend know that you are going to do this and you are doing it because you care about them.
- Encourage your friend to get help. You can go with them or tell someone they want to know.
- Get information from Student Support and Wellbeing, telephone help lines, websites etc. (See pages 11 to 16). This can help you understand what your friend is experiencing.
- Your friendship may be changed by the problem. You may feel bad that you can't help your friend enough or guilty if you have had to tell other people. These feelings are common and don't mean that you have done something wrong or not done enough.
- Your friend may get angry with you or say you don't understand. It is important to try not to take this personally. Often when people are feeling bad about themselves they get angry with the people they are closest to.
- It can be difficult to look after someone who is having difficulties. It is important for you to find someone to talk to, who can support you. You may not always be able to be there for your friend and that's OK.

Harm Minimisation

If I feel I must hurt myself, I will:

1. Try less destructive ways of doing it

E.g. pinching myself instead of cutting, snapping an elastic band on my wrist, or holding an ice-cube in my hand.

2. Always use clean implements

I will not share razors or implements with other people because of the risk of HIV and hepatitis.

3. Try to avoid deep cuts

I will try to think of the scarring that will be left in the future.

4. Learn to clean and dress cuts or wounds

To avoid infection I will keep clean tissues or dressings.

5. Seek medical attention if needed

If the cut is deep or won't stop bleeding, it will need to be treated by a nurse or doctor e.g. in A&E.

Delaying Tactics

I will remove implements for self-harm from my immediate area and try to delay getting to them. (If I have time to search for something to cut myself with, I may just be able to crush the impulse). E.g. I will keep them wrapped up tightly and high up on hard-to-reach shelves, and I will try to distract myself when I get the urge.

As soon as I feel the urge to self-harm, I will try to delay it by:

- Trying the 10-minute delay tactic and 'Surf the Urge' ...
I will say to myself that I will wait 10 minutes to self-harm. When time is up, I will think again, "Can I wait another 10 minutes?"
- Taking a deep breath, fold my arms, close my eyes and relax.
- Telling myself that I am not going to cut.
- Getting away from any objects I may use to harm myself so it's not as easy to break my resolution.
- Lying down somewhere (if possible).
- Staying like this until the urge goes, then quickly phone a help line or use another means of getting help.

Coping Strategies

I will try to identify the particular 'trigger' that gives me the urge to self-harm.

My trigger is

When I feel like self-harming, I will try to express my emotions by:

- Finding someone to talk to about my feelings (this could be a friend, family member or member of Staff)
- Talking to someone on the phone (I could ring a help line)
- Writing down my emotions as songs and poetry
- Drawing and painting on paper and/or ripping it up
- Hitting a pillow or other soft object
- Screaming into a pillow
- Listening to music that relates to my emotions and has a positive effect on them

Pull-Out Self Help Guide

I will tell someone I trust about my feelings.

I will try to talk to this person whenever I have the urge to self-harm.

This person is

Phone no

I will keep a hotline number with me at all times.

Samaritans (free to call).....**116 123**

Sussex Mental Healthline.....**0300 5000 101**

Other.....

I will seek Campus help if needed. I will tell someone how I am feeling or find someone to be with e.g.:

..... my Accommodation Officer

During office hours:

a Nurse Health Adviser Studenthealth@chi.ac.uk

a Wellbeing Adviser Wellbeing@chi.ac.uk

Call the University 24/7 emergency number 01243 816363

Call one of the dedicated help numbers (Residential Students only):

- BOC 01243 793477
- BRC..... 01243 793488
- Stockbridge 01243 533356 / 07824 349543
- Fishbourne 01243 790279 / 07791 692966
- Westgate..... 01243 812931 / 07795 257068
- Villa Maria, Prince of Wales, Chichester house 01243 793477

I will I will try talking to a health professional for out-of-hours help:

On-call GP 111

- Squeezing ice cubes until they melt
- Trying virtually anything I can (as long as it's legal and healthy) to stop the urge to cut.

I will help myself by imagining how I could be like a best friend to someone:

- If a good friend was about to cut themselves, what would I say to stop them?
- How would I distract them?
- How would I support them and help them to stop?

I will keep a diary of things I have tried and how they help.

I will try to recognize that self-harming is just the symptom of a root problem, I will try to address the root problem by seeking help from:

.....

Distraction Techniques

When I feel the urge to self-harm, I will try distracting myself by:

- Drinking a glass of water
- Watching a favourite film or TV programme; playing computer games
- Doing some form of exercise e.g. run, walk, ride my bike, or just dance like crazy
- Getting out of my room and going somewhere where there are other people
- Having a bath/using relaxing oils e.g. lavender
- Taking a really hot/cold shower
- Closing my eyes and naming 5 people I can't live without
- Writing the name of a loved one where I usually cut. Let it remind me of someone who cares for me and who will be hurt when I cut.
- Carrying pictures of my friends and family, and looking at them whenever I think of harming myself.

6. Remember the University 24/7 emergency number

I will make sure I have a charged mobile phone and signal;

I can call 01243 816363 at any time for first aid.

7. Know where the nurse health advisers are

During office hours I can drop-in to the Nurse Health Advisers who will clean and dress my wounds in complete confidence.

8. Try not to feel too angry or disappointed with myself for having done it

I need to be compassionate with myself.

9. Try to make some longer-term plans to reduce or avoid doing it in the future

I recognise that it is a difficult pattern to break.

10. If I attempt an overdose I will remember that:

I become less in control of what happens.

Even small overdoses can be fatal.

Ideas to help

Everyone has their own way of coping. Here are some things that can help.

Download the Calm Harm app: calmharm.co.uk

‘Calm Harm - manages self harm’ by stem4; provides tasks that help resist or manage the urge to self-harm.



Self-help pages

There is a pull-out self-help guide in the centre pages of this booklet. You can give it to your friend and, if you want, work through the answers with them or encourage them to work them through with one of our Student Support Advisers, see ‘Student Support and Wellbeing Services’ on page 12.

There are loads of services and websites around with information, advice and help - see the support, websites and phonedlines sections (pages 15 to 16).

Distractions

Some people find it helps to distract themselves if they feel they may self-harm. Sometimes it helps to express the emotions, sometimes it helps to try to forget them. We understand the ideas below might not work for everyone, and some people find it really difficult so it can be helpful to start by distracting for a short time, and build it up gradually.

Something fun: listen to music, watch a fave tv show, do a puzzle (sudoko, wordsearch) or pop some bubblewrap!

Something creative: painting, drawing or writing. Also, some people find drawing on themselves with a non-permanent red marker pen can help.

Something new: read a different magazine, try yoga, learn an instrument, do some physical exercise like go for a walk or jog.

Something comforting: allow yourself to cry, phone or meet someone you care about, sleep, cuddle a soft toy or pillow, or have a hot chocolate.

Something physical: Going for a walk, run, ride a bike, or just dance like crazy run until you can no longer breathe; take a hot shower!

Talk to someone: Talking can help to understand what's going on, how you're feeling and to come up with ideas to feel better. It can also help others to know how you're feeling and understand why you're doing the things you do.

More ideas:

There are many more ideas at:

nshn.co.uk/downloads/Distractions.pdf

University support

No-one has to go through self-harm on their own.

There might be someone to talk to at home or here at University. The following sections list places where someone will listen - both here at University and locally - and you can take your friend with you. You are always welcome to seek support for yourself if you are finding things difficult because of what your friend has told you.

Remember the University 24/7 emergency number can be called any time day or night for first aid or other urgent help **01243 816363**.

Togetherall - 24/7

You can also get 24/7 support through Togetherall. This is a supportive online community where interactions are anonymous and you can air your concerns and connect with peers or trained professionals. You can take part in courses and use other wellbeing tools like journaling, goal setting and self-assessments for support.

Sign up is free with your student email address: togetherall.com or access via the QR code. It takes 5 minutes, and you'll have immediate access to support - 24/7



Student Support and Wellbeing Services (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm)

Wellbeing Services

Wellbeing services offer 'Ask Wellbeing' drop in sessions and self-bookable triage appointments.

For information about Wellbeing Services and to book appointments visit: wellbeing.chi.ac.uk

Student Health

The Nurse Health Advisers run drop in clinics at the health centres on both campuses. The timetable can be found on the university help pages:

help.chi.ac.uk/student-health-service

Campus Registered Nurses

Becky Potheary and Chrissie Dunn

studenthealth@chi.ac.uk

Chaplain - Rev'd Dr. Alison Green

01243 816041

Alison.Green@chi.ac.uk

International Student Advisers

01243 812194

international@chi.ac.uk

If in doubt ask SIZ - **01243 816222**

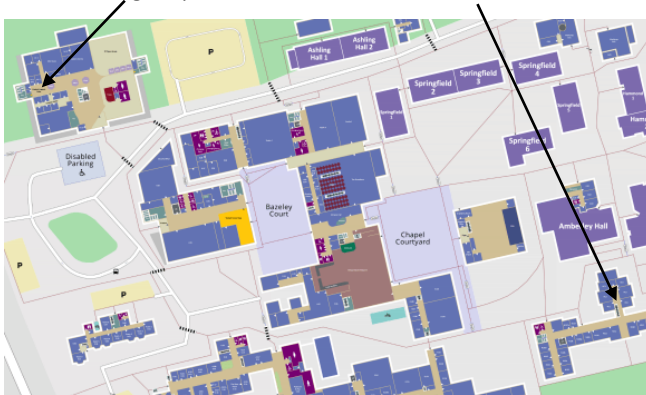
help@chi.ac.uk

Where to find us

At Chichester LRC and New Hall

Ask Wellbeing drop ins

New Hall Health and Advice Centre



At Bognor Regis LRC

LRC Annex: Health Centre and Ask Wellbeing drop ins



Other local support

Talk to your doctor

Before you go, visit docready.org to prepare your checklist. If your doctor's surgery is closed, you can get medical advice by calling **111**.

Your Space and FindItOut centres

For those aged 25 and under - information on life, support, health and places to go including FindItOut centres which offer drop-ins for advice and information. You can also book an appointment if you want to talk to someone in confidence.

yourspacewestsussex.co.uk

West Sussex Mind mental health charity

www.westsussexmind.org/

Worth Domestic Violence Advisors

Supports people at high risk of harm or homicide as a result of domestic abuse.

0330 222 8181 or 07834 968539

DomesticAbuseServicesCentral@westsussex.gov.uk

Saturn Centre supports anyone over 14 who has been sexually assaulted. 01293 600649

www.saturncentre.org

Websites and text/help lines

- **Togetherall:** free 24/7 supporting online community - see page 11 for details
- **Alumina/selfharmUK:** Free online self-harm support for 11-19's - www.selfharm.co.uk
- **Harmless:** a user led organisation that provides a range of services about self harm
www.harmless.org.uk
- **LifeSIGNS:** Self-Injury Guidance and Network Support, ideas and guidance for everyone affected by self-harm - www.lifesigns.org.uk
- **The Mix:** essential support for under 25s
www.themix.org.uk/self-harm
- **Calm Harm app:** a free app that helps you manage or resist the urge to self-harm - calmharm.co.uk
- **Kooth.com:** a free, safe and anonymous online chat and emotional wellbeing service for young people - kooth.com
- **SHOUT:** a free 24/7 text service for anyone in crisis anytime, anywhere. It's a place to go if you're struggling to cope and you need immediate help. Text **SHOUT** to 85258 for support

- **Student Minds:** UK students mental health charity
www.studentminds.org.uk
- **Mind:** the mental health charity
www.mind.org.uk
- **SANE:** to improve quality of life for anyone affected by mental illness
www.sane.org.uk
- **Sussex Mental Healthline: 0300 5000 101**
Telephone support and information 24 hours a day
- **Samaritans:** anonymous support for anyone in crisis, free call 116 124 -
jo@samaritans.org - www.samaritans.org
- **E-Wellbeing:** a digital wellbeing service for young people - e-wellbeing.co.uk

Other specialist help:

- Eating disorders:
www.beateatingdisorders.org.uk
- Sexual health:
www.sexualhealthwestsussex.nhs.uk
- Drugs:
www.talktofrank.com

