

Self-harm

If you or anyone you know needs help, we are here



UNIVERSITY OF
CHICHESTER

STUDENT SUPPORT
AND WELLBEING

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Some of 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>

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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 15 onwards) 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 text/help lines section on pages 19 and 20).

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

Communicating about self-harm

If you are self-harming...

...you might feel lonely, isolated and like you can't tell anyone about it - but **you are not alone**.

Some people perceive self-harm as "attention seeking" behaviour but it's clear that in most cases this is not true at all and most people feel they have to hide it. We really want to encourage you to talk about it and, more importantly, about how you're feeling.

This could be anonymously through services such as the **Samaritans** and **SHOUT** (find their details in our Websites and text/help lines section on pages 19 and 20) or having a chat with a friend, family member, one of the Student Support and Wellbeing services (see page 16), or your GP.

It's understandable that talking to someone might feel difficult (maybe even impossible) to start with. Sometimes writing, drawing or painting how you're feeling can help too. We're not saying it will fix everything, but usually it can really help to get it out - it can help you realise what's going on inside your head and how you're feeling, as well as helping others to understand why you may be behaving differently.

Self-harm is a form of communication in itself

Self-harm can be a way of expressing how you're feeling, whether this is intentional or not. It's not easy to talk about "how you're feeling", "what you're thinking" and "what's going on for you". This can lead to trying to find a way to cope with these things on your own. It can be very difficult to find the "right" words or words that can make/ help people understand how you're actually feeling inside.

Think of your friends

It can be a really good idea to share with a friend who you trust and who has been supportive in the past. Choose a place you where you are comfortable and a time when you can speak in privacy. You may find it easier to write, email or phone first.

They may be shocked, angry or sad but this is because they care for you. Talk about why your self-harm and why you told them. Tell them how they can help.

Do consider the impact your disclosure may have on your friends and try to minimise this.

Never tell someone in anger or blame them, it is always your choice to self-harm and blaming someone in anger will not help either of you.

Do not share graphic details or photos, these should only be shared with professionals who are equipped to deal with them.

For more help on how to tell someone try:

www.wikihow.com/Tell-Someone-You-Self-Harm

Keeping yourself safe

Trying to stop self-harming can be difficult. To help keep yourself safe think about using a less destructive way of self-harming, such as pinching instead of cutting or using elastic bands or ice cubes. If you are cutting yourself think of the scarring that will be left in the future. Avoid making deep cuts.

Here is some more advice about keeping yourself safe.

- When you are self-harming it's really important to look after yourself by using clean equipment and clean any cuts afterwards to reduce risk of infections. Learn to clean and dress cuts to avoid infection.
- Think about the environment you're in whilst self-harming: try to avoid dirty and dangerous situations and to be in a place near other people who could help you if necessary.
- When you need to cut, try and find a safe place where you will not be disturbed and where you feel calm.
- Have a first aid kit ready to hand, the Nurse Health Advisors can supply dressings and give you confidential advice.

- Ensure you have a charged phone on you and a signal so that you are able to call for support if necessary.
- 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. Remember you can call the university Help Line 01243 816363 any time day or night to get first aid.
- Take time to understand and manage risks related to any substances you may use, and use a condom every time you have sex.
- If you have taken an overdose, seek medical attention. You can phone 999 for an ambulance or 111 for free information and advice if you're not sure it's an emergency. If you can, take the tablets or packaging of tablets with you so medical staff know what you've taken. **Remember - if you overdose you are not always in control of what happens. Even small overdoses can kill.**
- Try not to feel too angry with yourself for having self harmed. Try to make some longer term plans to avoid doing so in the future. Recognise that it is a difficult pattern to break.

First aid advice for self-harm (cutting)

Although the University of Chichester does not encourage cutting, we do accept that this can be a coping method for some people. We encourage people who cut to do so in as safe and controlled way as possible to minimise harm to themselves and others. We offer advice on staying safe, and first aid and mental health support to students who wish to access it.

Once the urge to cut has passed, assess and treat any injury.

The main points when considering first aid after cutting is to control any bleeding and prevent possible infection.

- **If blood is pumping or pulsing out from the injured area, this means you have cut through an artery. This is an Emergency.**

Apply direct-pressure immediately and keep it there. Elevate the area if a limb. Call for help and dial 999 for an ambulance.

- If blood trickles or oozes out of a wound then it is a less serious injury. Cover the wound with a clean dressing and apply direct pressure to prevent bleeding.
- If the area of injury is on a limb then raise the limb to reduce blood flow to the area, reducing blood loss and allowing time for a blood clot to form.

- If you have any concerns about a wound or need to seek medical advice we would encourage you to contact a first aider by calling the university 24/7 number 01243 816363. If the Nurse Health Advisers are open (term time, office hours) you can drop in or email them for advice. See page 16 for details. There are other helpful services listed there too such as the university Wellbeing Service where you can attend 'Ask Wellbeing' drop-in sessions for further advice and information or book a 1:1 triage appointment with a member of the team to access further support such as counselling.
- Be aware that your blood is a potential hazard to other people. If a friend is helping to dress your wound they should wear gloves.
- Dispose of all sharps safely or store in a safe place.

If you are ever in doubt, phone NHS 111

When to seek medical advice

It is important that you tell someone, preferably an appropriate person, if you have hurt yourself severely or if you feel you are at risk of harming yourself severely and do not feel safe - call **999** in an emergency, **111** if you are not sure, or call **01243 816363** for a university first aider.

It is normal to be scared, but it is essential to get proper medical attention as quickly as possible. The following situations give some examples of the level of medical attention you should be seeking:

- If the wound continues to bleed heavily once you have carried out the above steps, including bandaging - **A&E**
- If the cut is deep and has exposed underlying muscle, this may be a much darker red in colour - **A&E**
- If a foreign object is stuck in the wound, you should not apply direct pressure. Use indirect pressure by pressing the wound together; do not remove the object - **A&E**
- If you have lost sensation in the area of injury, or a more widespread area; you may have damaged a nerve - **urgent GP or A&E**
- If you have limited movement, you may have damaged a tendon - **urgent GP or A&E**
- If after a few hours or several days you can see the wound is infected; it could be red, sore, swollen or weeping- **urgent GP or Nurse Health Advisers**
- If you think you might need steristrips/stitches to close the wound or you are uncertain, the Nurse Health Advisers on campus can offer advice and support (see the maps on page 17 for their location).

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 Helpline..... **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 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

The Calm Harm app provides some immediate activities and techniques to help you break the cycle of self-harm.

calmharm.co.uk



Self-help guide

There is a pull-out self-help guide in the centre pages of this booklet. It has been designed for you to complete so you can carry it with you everywhere. If you want you can work through your answers with one of our Student Support Advisers, see 'Student Support and Wellbeing Services' on page 16.

There are loads of services and websites around to help you - see the support and website text/help line pages (15 onwards).

Distract yourself

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, but they might help you:

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

Something creative: painting, drawing or writing. Also, some people find drawing on yourself 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 your bike, or just dance like crazy run until you can no longer breathe; take a hot shower!

You'll find many more ideas at:

nshn.co.uk/downloads/Distractions.pdf

If you find it difficult it can be helpful to start by distracting yourself for a short time, and build it up gradually.

Talk to someone: Talking can help you 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. Take a look at the next section on 'Confidentiality'.

Confidentiality

It can be difficult telling someone about self-harm, especially if you're worried they will tell someone else. But talking to someone can often be a positive way of starting to come to terms with anything on your mind, at the same time as giving that person an opportunity to help and support you in any way they can.

Usually what's said between you and a professional (whether a member of university staff or your GP or other health professional) should be kept between you both. However, if they are concerned about your safety, they may discuss with you the possibility of talking to someone else who could help. If you aren't sure what is confidential, ask.

It's a long link to type, but this article might be useful: www.themix.org.uk/mental-health/self-harm/confidentiality-and-self-harm-5685.html

Talking to a member of university staff

Student Support and Wellbeing services have very approachable, professional and confidential advisers who are there to help and support you.

They will not share any information you tell them without your permissions except in exceptional circumstances where your safety and wellbeing is at serious risk or there is the possibility of harm to others.

Alternatively, if there is a tutor, Academic Adviser or any staff member you trust, do talk to them - they are also there to help you and listen to you. They may not have the necessary experience or training to be able to give you the best possible support, so they might need to refer you to a counsellor or other health professional to make sure you have all the support you need.

If you are under 18 they have a legal duty to pass certain information on (such as physical abuse or self-harm) but this may not have to be to a parent/carer.

Talking to a health professional such as a doctor

The only time they will need to break confidentiality is if you or someone around you is at severe risk of danger (for example, considered likely to be going to act on thoughts of suicide). They should ask your permission before contacting anyone and let you know what is happening.

Remember health professionals are not there to trick you or betray you. They are there to make sure you are listened to, supported and kept safe, and they have a duty to do what is in your best interests.

University support

You don't have to go through anything on your own.

There might be someone you feel you can talk to at home or here at university.

Remember you can call the university 24/7 emergency number 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

The image shows a promotional banner for Togetherall. On the left, the logo consists of two overlapping circles, one yellow and one teal, above the word "togetherall" in a lowercase, sans-serif font. Below the logo, the text "FREE mental health support" is displayed in a bold, sans-serif font, with "FREE" in teal and "mental health support" in black. On the right side of the banner is a large, black and white QR code. The background of the banner is a light beige color with faint white lines forming a grid pattern. A yellow and orange curved shape is visible at the bottom right corner of the banner.

togetherall

FREE mental health support

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

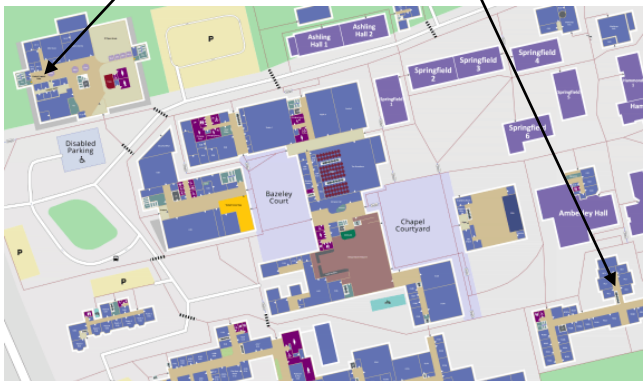
If in doubt ask SIZ - **01243 816222**
help@chi.ac.uk

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 15 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

