



## Self-Harm – a guide to helping young people

### What is self-harm?

Self-harm is when a person feels compelled to inflict pain on themselves in some way. It is usually a sign that something is wrong, and can act as a release for people when they are suffering emotionally. Self-harming behaviours include:

- Self-injuring ; cutting, burning, scratching, bruising and pulling hair out
- Developing an eating disorder
- Drinking or taking drugs excessively
- Taking risks with sexual health and choice of sexual partners
- Taking overdoses

### What causes self-harming?

Self-harm is often found to be a symptom of other underlying issues. There are many reasons why a young person may choose to adopt self-harming behaviours:

- If they suffer from anxiety
- Depression
- Feeling unsupported in life
- Being bullied
- As tension relief during stressful times or following a traumatic event
- To punish themselves in some way
- As an expression of hidden emotions
- In severe cases, self-harming can be a suicide attempt

Self-harming can be misinterpreted by many as a 'cry for help' or attention-seeking, and whilst this could be true of some behaviours, often it is a deeply private act for many young people, and one which they might feel intense shame and embarrassment about. They may hide self-injury marks from others and hold a deep-seated fear of 'being found out'.

Counselling Appointments line: 0118 901 5668

E: [info@no5.org.uk](mailto:info@no5.org.uk) | W: [no5.org.uk](http://no5.org.uk)

Registered Charity No. 262681

## Getting help

Self-harming has the potential to be very dangerous as some harming and injury behaviours, such as cutting, strangling and taking overdoses can lead to them killing themselves, even if accidentally. Conversely, they may actually view self-harming as a survival technique to help them when things get bad, and have no desire to end their lives through it, but accidental death can and does occur in these situations.

Sometimes harming behaviours can overtake a young person too, so that they have little control over them in the end – things like eating disorders and excessive drink and drug abuse can put them in genuine physical peril and have huge health implications for their futures. This is one of the reasons why it is so important to get help if we find our young people in a pattern of self-harming. Self-harming is only ever really a temporary release from what is at the root of a person's problems. Key to regaining control and phasing out such acts is addressing the underlying problems that are causing them to harm in the first place. The first step on this path is to encourage them to talk to someone they trust about what is going on with them; help them to see that no one who cares for them wants to see them suffer and inflict pain inwards on themselves in this way – we DO want to help them. Reinforce this and be there for them to talk to, but also make it clear that they can also talk to another parent, friend, teacher, school nurse, or GP.

A young person may require further treatments, such as medical intervention depending on any injuries, and/or referral for talking treatments like CBT or counselling. The first port of call should be their GP, though they may be reluctant to make an appointment themselves or attend alone. Make this easier for them by offering to arrange the appointment on their behalf, and/or be willing to attend it with them. Do not let them suffer in silence – the cycle can be broken.

## How can No5 help?

Learning to effectively deal with the issues at the root of self-harming behaviours is important, as not dealt with it can cause longer-term issues and serious injury, so it is important to talk to somebody about it if things are becoming too much to handle. Here at No5 we offer free, impartial and confidential support to young people aged 10-25. Come and talk to us – counselling is about listening to, and helping them to work through their problems and find more effective ways of dealing with life's issues, in a caring, trusting environment.

### Ways to contact us:

**Counselling Phone:** 0118 901 5668

**Admin Phone:** 0118 901 5649

**E-mail:** [info@no5.org.uk](mailto:info@no5.org.uk)

### Address:

No5 Young People's Counselling and Information  
2-4 Sackville Street  
Reading, RG1 1NT

### Social Media:

**Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/no5youngpeople>

**Twitter:** @no5youngpeople

### Our Opening Hours are:

Monday	16:00 – 21:00
Tuesday	10:00 – 13:00 and 16:00 – 21:00
Wednesday	16:00 – 21:00
Thursday	16:00 – 21:00
Friday	16:00 – 21:00
Saturday & Sunday	Closed

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