



Self-Harm

Self-harm is the generic term used to describe any type of behaviour that causes harm to one's body, mind, or even, prospects.

Many people use harmful behaviours to cope with life stresses, some are more harmful than others. Some people do not perceive their coping strategies to be harmful, e.g. nail biting, whilst others are not immediately recognised as self-harming, e.g. involvement in crime.

Self-injury (physical self-harm) is the most commonly recognised type of self-harm. *(see fact sheet on Self-Injury for further information)*

Self-harm is a response to an event(s), it is the way that someone may deal with episodes of stress and unbearable emotional pain. If someone has resources, support and a strong positive sense of self, then they are less likely to adopt harmful behaviours as coping strategies. If they have a poor sense of self-worth or are experiencing unpleasant and difficult life events they are less likely to see themselves as someone to be cherished and taken care of. This includes self-care.

Self-harm is not the same as suicide. People who self-harm report that this is a coping mechanism that helps them to keep going during difficult times.

People who self-harm are rarely a danger to anyone else, and deserve to have compassion and help to enable them to overcome their difficulties and find other ways of coping. The vast majority of people who self-harm do not have a mental disorder. It is usually a response to trauma, abuse or other difficult significant life event.

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