

FACTS ABOUT SELF HARM

WHAT IS SELF HARM

Self-harming is a deliberate act of causing injury and physical pain to oneself by various means without it necessarily being a suicide attempt.

Individuals may harm themselves because they feel emotionally disconnected or isolated and hurting themselves is the only way they feel real or connected. For some people it is a way of coping with stress or emotional pain while others perform such acts as a form of self-punishment.

Self-harm can also be a sign or symptom of mental illness. Ways in which people self-harm include cutting, burning, biting and scratching, although other methods are more indirect such as drinking to excess.

There's no such thing as a typical person who self-harms. It can affect anyone of any age, background or race. It's difficult to obtain accurate information on the prevalence of self-harm in Australia as injuries are quite often concealed.

SYMPTOMS

- Depression
- Guilt
- Numbness
- Anger
- Sadness
- Loneliness
- Hopelessness
- Highly self-critical
- Self-hatred
- Suicidal thoughts
- Inability to cope
- Problems expressing emotions

CAUSES

There are many different reasons that a person self-harms including emotional distress, mental illness, stress, low self-esteem, anger, lack of control, isolation, domestic violence or sexual abuse.

TREATMENT

- Psychological intervention and/or counselling
- Psychiatric treatment
- Coping skills training
- Medical treatment for the physical injuries
- Support Groups to provide support and understanding to the individual, friends and family

HOW TO HELP YOURSELF

Even though self-harm can provide immediate relief it does not deal with the underlying issue.

Often it's not easy for someone to admit that they have a problem, let alone to confide in anyone about what they are doing. If you're worried about self-harm in any way, there are specialists who can offer you professional assistance so you don't have to deal with it on your own.

Self-harming can be stopped if you are willing to try. Getting the support that is needed plays a big role in recovery and doing it alone may be difficult.

Cultivating supportive relationships with family and friends is essential to the recovery process. It is also important to find the right psychological treatment for you, as it can make a difference in learning how to cope.

Joining a support group and being with others who are going through a similar thing can be reassuring and increase your support networks with others.

It may help to seek education on harm minimisation techniques and first aid training to ensure your safety until the self-harming behaviour is under control.

HOW CAN FAMILY AND FRIENDS HELP?

Finding out that someone you care about is deliberately hurting himself or herself can be very distressing.

It is important for you to educate yourself, and find out as much information as you can to support your loved one calmly and non-judgementally.

Let the person know you will be there for them without pushing them for information or reinforcing the behaviour.

However, encourage and support them in seeking appropriate professional help.

If you feel uncomfortable with the self-harming behaviour, it is important to know your limits and seek support for yourself.

Supporting a friend who is self-harming can be difficult and you need to ensure you're taking care of your own needs.

It is also important to ask the person whether he/she feels suicidal and if so contact your local hospital or community mental health service. to express understanding and empathy, while reminding the person that they can recover.

REFERRAL/SUPPORT INFO

Drug ARM 1300 656 800
info@drugarm.com.au
drugarm.com.au

Drug ARM Central Intake
07 3620 8880

Lifeline Australia 13 11 14
24/7 crisis support

Or contact your local GP (General Practitioner)

REFERENCES

1 Health Direct (2016). Self-harm. Retrieved from <https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/self-harm>



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