

Self Harm Myths

Myth: Self-harm is Just ‘Attention Seeking’

- This is an unhelpful label that puts people off getting support.
- Self-harm is essentially a very private and often secretive behaviour. It is more about expression than attention.
- If somebody did self-harm for attention then there are still some serious questions to ask about what is going on for that person. The need for attention should not automatically be dismissed as a negative; the need to connect with others and to be valued is genuine and legitimate.

Myth: It Means you're Crazy

- Sometimes, people who have a diagnosed mental health condition will have associated harming behaviours but for most young people who self-harm it is an expression of emotional distress, which anyone can experience.
- 1 in 10 young people have a mental health disorder and so if you do get given a diagnosis it is not anything to be ashamed of! Don't be afraid to ask questions as the language can be confusing and don't forget that the label doesn't take away who you are as a person.

Myth: Boys don't Self-harm

- Boys face difficulties just as much as girls – they experience feelings including hurt and sadness and they have a need to express these emotions.
- Boys often feel uncomfortable expressing emotion or admitting that they self-harm because society tells us that these experiences are unique to women. It is not true. Lots of boys struggle with issues such as self-harm and so it is not “weird” to be one of them.
- Some boys may not relate to the idea of self-harm if they have a method that isn't the more commonly known cutting. But self-harm can be any kind of destructive behaviour that somebody does to their own body, so it's important not to overlook people or actions just because they don't fit the stereotypes.

Myth: Only “Emos” Self-harm

- Self-harm can affect anybody, regardless of gender, style, musical taste, academic ability or any other category.
- It is also unhelpful to assume that people who mix in a particular crowd are likely to self-harm. We need to remember that people are individuals with a whole range of tastes and motivations and behaviours.

Myth: Talking about Self-harm is Dangerous and Unhelpful

- Making a subject “taboo” only creates barriers between people and also barriers to support.
- Young people will be hearing about self-harm from somewhere. It is important that in amongst that they have access to the right kind of information that will give them the facts, keep them safe and direct them to the best kind of support.



The Numbers On Self-Harm

SELF-HARM

can begin as early as

**SEVEN
YEARS OLD**



BUT THE AGE OF ONSET IS
USUALLY BETWEEN THE AGES OF

12 & 15 YEARS

Roughly . . .



1 in 6 teenagers

have tried some form of self-harm

Approximately

5%

of these teenagers hurt themselves in serious and persistent ways

Emotional Symptoms of Self-Harm:



**Drastic
Mood Changes**
be aware of
symptoms of
depression or
anxiety



**Abnormal Out of
Control Behavior**
becoming
excessively upset
can trigger an
urge to self-
harm



**Excessive
Social Isolation**
struggles with
developing
interpersonal
relationships



**Lack of
Confidence**
poor self-esteem
and self-image

Physical Damages:

Hairpulling

(trichotillomania)

Small, Linear Cuts

common cut locations are on the forearm, upper arm and legs

Poisoning

swallowing poisonous substances such as bleach or other chemicals

Burning

Headbanging

against walls or other objects

Picking at Skin or Reopening Wounds

Bruising

commonly using blunt objects and found on parts of the body that are hidden

Bonebreaking

commonly in the hands and feet, sometimes larger bones are broken

Know The Risk Factors and Signs of Self-Harm

Risk Factors to be Aware of:



Difficulty expressing feelings



Negative body image



Extreme emotional reactions to minor occurrences (anger or sorrow)



Lack of coping skills



Stressful family events (divorce, death, conflict)



Depression



Loss of a friend, boyfriend/girlfriend, or social status

Signs



Wearing long sleeves during warm weather



Wearing thick wristbands that are never removed



Unexplained scars or marks on body



Abnormally secretive or elusive behavior



Items that could be used for cutting (knives, scissors, safety pins, razors) are missing



Spending abnormally lengthy periods of time alone