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Self-harm support

Understanding, support and places to turn

Information and places to turn

For people aged 16 and over

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Find the support you need

You can go straight to what you need. Select a section below.
For immediate danger, call 999 or go to A&E.

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Telephone numbers are shown clearly. Website links are clickable.
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You deserve care and understanding

Self-harm can be a way of coping. It often arrives because something feels unbearable and other way of managing are not available or do not feel enough. Being told to stop, by someone who has not offered anything to put in its place, is not the support you need.

You do not have to have stopped self-harming to deserve help. This guide offers ways to understand what is happening, get through urges and build other forms of support, at a pace you can work with.

You are entitled to compassionate treatment for injuries, without a lecture. You can ask about pain re dressings and aftercare like anyone else. You do not have to justify yourself to earn care. Clinicians m ask what happened so they can treat you safely and offer the right support.

Medical care matters

A GP or urgent treatment centre can assess minor injuries and advise on aftercare. Seek prompt medical advice for signs of infection, worsening pain or an injury you are unsure about. Call NHS 111 you need help deciding where to go.

When help cannot wait

Call 999 or go to A&E for a serious injury, uncontrolled bleeding, suspected overdose or poisoning, or you cannot keep yourself safe. Do not wait for symptoms after an overdose. Ask someone to stay wit you and help you get care.

Someone to talk to now

For urgent mental health support in England, call 111 and select the mental health option. Samaritan 116 123, free, 24/7. Shout: text SHOUT to 85258, free, 24/7. If you are under 19, Childline: 0800 111

https://www.nhs.uk/every-mind-matters/urgent-support/

Self-harm does not always mean wanting to die, but suicidal feelings can occur alongside it. If that changes for you, tell someon and seek urgent support. This guide supports, rather than replaces, medical care and an individual assessment.

Getting through an urge

The aim is to create a little more space between an urge and an action. Choose one tool that feels manageable. If a tool does not help, that is useful information about what you need, not a failure.

Start with the next few minutes

Move towards somewhere safer or another person. If you can, put distance between yourself and thi you might use to hurt yourself. Send a simple message: "I am struggling with urges. Can you stay wi me or talk for a while?"

TIPP skills from Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT)

DBT is a talking therapy with practical skills for managing emotions. TIPP uses changes in the body to help reduce intense distress. You do not need to use all four. These are brief coping skills, not a complete treatment programme.

T - Temperature

Try a cool, damp cloth on your cheeks or gently splash your face with cool water. Keep it comfortable avoid direct ice, painful cold or holding your breath.

I - Intense exercise

If medically safe, try a short burst of movement such as brisk walking or dancing. Adapt to your abilit avoid exercise if injured, unwell or if it becomes a way of punishing yourself.

P - Paced breathing

Breathe gently in for about 4 counts and out for about 6. Keep the breath comfortable; return to norm breathing if you feel dizzy.

P - Paired muscle relaxation

Gently tense a muscle group while breathing in, then release it as you breathe out. Try hands or shoulders; avoid injured or painful areas.

Check with a clinician before temperature or intense exercise skills if you have a heart condition, fainting, an eating disorder, co sensitivity, or take medication affecting heart rate. Choose breathing or a comfortable grounding activity meanwhile.

https://www.mindfulteen.org/dbt/distress-tolerance/tipp-skills/

People who understand self-harm

Sift - formerly Self Injury Support

Non-judgemental listening support for all ages and genders. Call **0808 800 8088** on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays, 6-9pm; text **07537 432444** Monday-Friday, 6-9pm. Email support is also available; replies can take up to a week. Check current hours before contacting.

https://sift.org.uk/get-help/listening-support-services/

Battle Scars - survivor-led support

UK-wide virtual peer groups for adults aged 18+, including an Inbetweeners group for people who mostly do not act on urges, and support for family and friends. FRESH offers a planned peer-support call for adults in England via an online referral; it is not a crisis service. Check the current age wordin and group criteria.

https://www.battle-scars-self-harm.org.uk/

LifeSIGNS

User-led since 2002. Information for people of all ages, with accessible writing about why self-injury happens, coping with urges and supporting someone else. Includes resources about adult self-injury.

https://www.lifesigns.org.uk/

Harmless

User-led specialist information and support for people who self-harm, families and professionals. Offe therapeutic and stabilisation support across ages. Funded services have geographical and other criteria; check eligibility rather than assuming UK-wide therapy is available.

https://harmless.org.uk/our-services/people-that-self-harm/

National Self Harm Network forum

A moderated online peer-support forum, available to access 24/7. Check registration rules and age requirements. A post may not receive an immediate reply; use live crisis support if you need someon now. Step away if reading discussions increases your urges.

https://www.nshn.co.uk/

Apps worksheets and DBT resources

Calm Harm - free app

A free, password-protected app from stem4, developed for young people over 13. Short activities help y manage urges, including comfort, distraction, expression and breathing. Download through the official website. It is not an emergency service or a substitute for therapy.

https://calmharm.stem4.org.uk/

Get Self Help - DBT skills

Free explanations and worksheets covering mindfulness, distress tolerance, emotion regulation and relationships. Explore one skill at a time; using worksheets is different from taking part in a full DBT programme.

https://www.getselfhelp.co.uk/dbt-dialectical-behaviour-therapy/

Get Self Help - an emergency or soothe box

Ideas for a small collection of comforting objects, grounding reminders and activities to reach for during distress. Choose things that fit your sensory needs and do not cause pain or injury.

https://www.getselfhelp.co.uk/emergency-or-soothe-box-first-aid-for-distress/

DBT Self Help

Accessible explanations of DBT and its skills, including TIPP, mindfulness and ways to navigate relationships. An educational website; it does not provide individual assessment or a treatment programme.

https://dbtselfhelp.com/

DBT Tools

Free explanations of DBT skills across distress tolerance, mindfulness, emotion regulation and interpersonal effectiveness. Use alongside professional support where possible, adapting tools to your needs.

https://dbt.tools/

Mindful Teen - DBT for young people

Information and practical skills written for young people, including TIPP. Useful for 16-17-year-olds and anyone supporting them. Educational resources rather than a UK referral service.

https://www.mindfulteen.org/dbt/distress-tolerance/tipp-skills/

Treatment programmes and referrals

Ask your GP or mental health clinician for an assessment of what is driving self-harm and what treatme may help. You can ask about DBT, DBT adapted for adolescents (DBT-A), or a CBT-informed intervention tailored to self-harm. There is no single programme suitable for everyone.

For young people aged 16-17

NICE (the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence) recommends considering DBT-A for young people with frequent self-harm and significant difficulties regulating emotions. A full programme may include individual therapy, a skills group, coaching and work with family or carers. Ask children and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) about local provision and the age limit for starting.

NELFT DBT-A - north-east London

Free NHS programme for young people aged 13 to 17 years and 4 months with a GP in Barking & Dagenham, Redbridge, Havering or Waltham Forest. Includes individual therapy, multi-family skills train and coaching. Only allocated CAMHS clinicians can refer; clinical criteria and assessment apply.

https://www.nelft.nhs.uk/dbt-a-service/

ELFT CAMHS DBT - east London

Free NHS programme within City & Hackney, Newham and Tower Hamlets CAMHS for ages 13-18. A clinician must refer by 17 years and 4 months to allow treatment before 18. Includes individual therapy multi-family skills training and coaching; discuss suitability with your care coordinator.

https://www.elft.nhs.uk/services/camhs-dialectical-behaviour-therapy-service

For adults aged 18+

NICE (the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence) recommends a structured CBT-informed intervention tailored to self-harm for adults. DBT may also be appropriate depending on your needs. As your GP or community mental health team about available programmes and referral criteria. A stand-al skills group is different from comprehensive DBT.

Kingston Complex Needs Pathway - adult example

Free NHS service for adults aged 18-65 in Kingston meeting its clinical criteria for emotionally unstable borderline personality disorder (EUPD/BPD). Offers DBT and other interventions following assessment. Ask your GP about referral through Kingston Single Point of Access, or discuss with your existing NHS team. Self-harm alone does not establish this diagnosis.

https://swlstg.nhs.uk/service-detail/service/kingston-complex-needs-pathway-46/

https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng225

Courses to explore

LATER - Wellbeing and Recovery College

Free course for adults aged 18+ living, working or studying in Ealing, Hounslow or Hammersmith & Fulham. Learning about Thinking, Emotions and Relationships draws on Dialectical Behaviour Therap (DBT), Mentalization-Based Therapy (MBT), group psychotherapy and attachment theory. MBT explores our own and other people’s thoughts and feelings; attachment theory explores how close relationships shape us. It is an educational course, rather than a full DBT treatment programme. The Autumn 2026 listing starts 7 October, Wednesdays 10am-12pm, for 10 weeks in Brentford. Check places or future intakes on **020 8483 1456**.

https://www.westlondon.nhs.uk/our-services/adult/mental-health-services/recovery-college

Alumina - online support for ages 16-17

Free seven-week online self-harm support course. The full service range is 10-17, with groups arrang by age; some 18-year-olds may be accepted at the team's discretion. Sign up online to explore suitability. A paid companion workbook can also be used with a trusted adult. This is not a crisis serv

https://www.selfharm.co.uk/

Finding the right level of support

A course or peer group can offer connection and practical skills alongside therapy. If self-harm is frequent, worsening or linked to suicidal feelings, ask for an individual assessment rather than relying a course alone. You can ask a clinician to help you choose a programme and plan support while waiting.

Self help booklets to explore

These free resources cover adults, older young people and those supporting them. Choose a format and starting point that suits you; no single booklet fits every age or need.

Self Harm - CNTW NHS self help guide

For adults and older young people. An NHS guide written by clinical psychologists, exploring self-harm, emotions, relationships and longer-term support. Read online or explore the available formats. Use copi exercises with a clinician where possible; some older sections contain pain-based alternatives.

https://selfhelp.cntw.nhs.uk/self-help-guides/self-harm

The truth about self-harm - Mental Health Foundation

Free downloadable booklet, primarily for young people and their supporters. Covers understanding self-harm, talking about it, coping with urges and seeking help. A useful shorter introduction alongside t adult-focused guide above.

https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/truth-about-self-harm

Cardiff and Vale NHS self-help workbook

Free interactive workbook for secondary-school-age young people, including ages 16-17. Contains worksheets on feelings, triggers, self-compassion and DBT skills. Work through selected sections with support; avoid pain-based substitutes and follow current medical advice rather than older first-aid guidance.

https://cavuhb.nhs.wales/files/resilience-project/rp-changes-18-8/self-harm-self-help-workbook-english-pdf/

Coping with self-harm - parents and carers

Free booklet developed by Oxford researchers and clinicians with parent/carer input. The guide received Highly Commended recognition at the 2016 BMA Patient Information Awards. Written for supporters of young people, rather than as an adult self-help workbook. Download through Charlie Waller.

https://charliewaller.org/mental-health-resources/coping-with-self-harm

A plan that fits you

Make a safety plan together

When things are calmer, write down early warning signs, what tends to make urges stronger, a few cop steps, safer places, people you can contact and where to get urgent care. Agree practical ways to reduc access to things you might use to hurt yourself. Keep the plan where you can find it quickly.

Sift - self-harm safety plan

A free worksheet to help you create your own plan, ideally with someone you trust or a clinician. Include what has helped before and what you need others to do when you are struggling.

https://sift.org.uk/for-people-who-self-harm/self-harm-safety-plan/

Understanding what the urge is asking for

At a calmer moment, notice what happened beforehand and what self-harm seemed to offer: relief, expression, control, feeling something, or a break from overload. This can help you and a therapist choo support that addresses the need. Keep notes brief and non-graphic.

Changing Faces - support with scars

For people who would like support with the appearance or emotional impact of scars. Skin camouflage information, online resources and support are available. Face-to-face camouflage appointments are currently limited to Bridgend in Wales; they are not available through Changing Faces in England, Scotla or Northern Ireland. You do not need to hide scars to deserve care.

https://www.changingfaces.org.uk/services-support/skin-camouflage-service/

Hub of Hope - find support near you

A searchable UK mental health support directory. Search by location and use the filters to explore local national services. Check age limits, referral routes and availability directly with the provider.

https://hubofhope.co.uk/

If you are supporting someone

Listen without judgement. Ask what would help, offer company and practical support, and help them access medical care when needed. Avoid punishment, demands for promises or making support conditional on stopping. Agree a plan for urgent situations together.

Resources are offered as starting points, not individual endorsements. Services and access criteria can change. Details checked 4 October 2026. This guide is for people aged 16+ and those supporting them.