




Understanding Self-Harm


Resource pack




Conversation roadmap




Taking that first step to begin a conversation on a difficult subject can feel quite scary. When you are ready to try, find a calm environment and be ready to listen in an accepting and non-judgmental way.




Recognise it can take a lot for someone to open up. Even if you find it hard to understand why they might be self-harming, listen to their story and try to be reassuring.



Ask open-ended questions to explore the topic further. This will help you understand how they are feeling and what support they might need. Respond calmly even if you don't feel calm.



Offer to help find further support such as a GP. But don't make unrealistic promises about confidentiality.



Don't forget to look after yourself. Self-harm is a difficult thing to support someone else with and it's important to remember to also have someone who can support you if you are finding it upsetting.

Start the conversation card

I have been self-harming for

_____ Days

_____ Months

_____ Weeks

_____ Years

I self-harm by

Cutting

Not eating

Drugs

Alcohol

Exercise

Other _____

I self-harm because

I feel comfortable telling

Only you

Doctor

Support line

Friends

Family

Other _____

You can help me by

Just listening

Find me professional support

Finding resources

Other _____

The 5 W's of disclosing self-harm

It can be hard to decide where to start when you are ready to talk, so break it down into the 5 w's of who you want to tell, what you want to tell them, when you would like to try talking, why you are telling them and where you feel comfortable to have this conversation, to help you plan what you would like to share and how you want to do this.

Who

When

Where

Why

What

It can be difficult for other people to understand why you self-harm and it is natural for whoever you tell to have questions once you have shared this with them. Remember you don't have to answer anything you are not comfortable with, but if you would like to try to help them understand better it is useful to think about the kinds of things you might be asked ahead of time to you prepare.

Here are some suggested ways you can respond to questions you don't want to answer:
I'm not ready to talk about that / I'd rather not say / I am not comfortable sharing that / I'd prefer not to discuss that right now / that question is too difficult for me to answer at the moment.

Write down things you think you might be asked, and how you might answer these questions.

Self-harm diary

Use this section to think in more detail about how you felt before, during and after you self-harmed.

Date

When did I self-harm?

What was my trigger?

What were my urges?

Did I try any distractions before harming myself?

Did I tell anyone?

Have I cared properly for my wounds?

Before: What happened to trigger my urges?

During: How did I hurt myself?

After: How do I feel now?