

Self-Harm Myths

There are lots of myths and misconceptions surrounding self-harm and the people that experience it.

Cutting is the only form of self-harm to worry about:

Cutting is one form of self-harm. Others could be head-banging, burning, using drugs or alcohol to cope with problems, not eating or over-eating, spending all their time on addictive behaviours like gaming or social media, and swallowing foreign objects. Self-harm covers any behaviour or compulsion that results in physical and or mental harm.

If young people know about self-harm, they might be tempted to try it:

If young people know about self-harm it doesn't make them more likely to try it. If you notice something that makes you worry a young person might have hurt themselves on purpose, try to find a calm moment to talk about it with them.

Self-harm is only present in teenage girls:

It is often assumed that girls are more likely to self-harm than boys, however this is not true. Self-harm is a coping mechanism, something that some young people rely on when under stress or in difficult situations – it isn't sex or gender based.

Children and young people grow out of self-injuring behaviours, so what is the point in treatment?

Some children and young people grow out of self-injuring behaviours but lots don't. Self-harming could be a way to deal with difficult feeling so treatment can help find healthier coping mechanisms when life feels stressful.

It is just attention seeking:

Due to the guilt felt from self-harming, many people who hurt themselves will actually spend weeks, months or sometimes years hiding their harm from other people.

Self-harm is a suicide attempt:

Self-harm is a coping mechanism and for the majority of people it is used as a way to get through the current distress they feel. It is used as a way to cope with the day to day rather than an attempt to end their life.

People who self-harm are violent:

Just because someone is hurting themselves, this does not make them more likely than anyone else to hurt another person.