

Self-Harm: Parents and Carers

Why is my child self-harming?

Self-harm is a **coping mechanism** that your child may use to deal with very difficult feelings. People often self-harm when life feels hard to cope with- think of it as a bubbling volcano- their distressing feelings have built up and it has become **too overwhelming** for them to cope with. Physical pain can feel easier than feeling out of control emotionally, and so this can give many young people the **feeling of control** that they need.

It can be understood as an **important message** about how a young person is feeling and needs to be handled **carefully and sensitively**.

What's the best way to react?

It's **completely natural** that you may feel upset by the discovery or disclosure, or that you may have feelings of anger, or even guilt about not noticing. However, it's important not to become emotional.

The golden rule is to stay calm. This will help your child feel more able to open up to you. Inform them that you are listening and that they can talk to you, **without judgement**, and do just that...listen! Often young people don't want you to immediately 'fix' things, they just want to feel **heard**, and their feelings **validated**.

Do:

Take pressure off them by doing an activity while you talk. Take a walk or a drive together or do something practical like colouring or painting so that the experience feels **less intense**.

Use **open ended questions** to help them explore their feelings, such as:

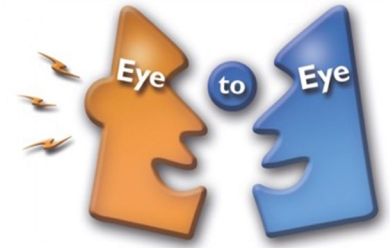
- "When do you tend to feel the urge to self-harm?"
- "How are you doing?"
- "How would you like me to support you?"

Let them come to you when they feel ready to talk and **reassure them** that they can talk to you whenever.

Use **supportive phrases** like:

- "I'm proud of you"
- "Thank you for telling me"
- "We'll get through this together"

Suggest they text you or write you a letter, if you can see they are struggling verbally. This also gives you time to **process** what they've told you and think about how you'd like to respond.



"Sometimes we all need someone to talk to"



Helpful Resources

[Talking about self-harm](#)

[No Harm Done: A Parent's Journey](#)

[Keeping Children Safe: Self-Harm](#)

[Calm Harm App](#)

Useful Contacts

Eye to Eye Counselling Service:

01443 202940

info@eyetoeye.wales

NSPCC

0808 800 5000

www.nspcc.org.uk

Young Minds

0808 802 5544

www.youngminds.org.uk



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Don't:

bombard them with too many questions or make them feel **interrogated** become frustrated or angry

Dismiss it by calling it “a phase” or “attention seeking”
‘helicopter’ over them constantly to keep tabs on their actions...check in now and again instead

Force them to stop...taking away their **copng mechanism** could be more harmful

What else can I do?

- Ask the young person if a referral to one of our counsellor might be helpful
- Explore the Calm Harm app together to see what might work for the young person
- Spend **quality time together** doing activities they enjoy
- Help promote good sleep, staying active and eating well
- Take a look at some of the resources to help understand more

Helpful Resources for Young People

Self-harm safety plan (hatw.co.uk)

CALM HARM APP

E--wellbeing.co.uk/sh-resources/

Useful Contacts for Young People

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01443 202940

info@eyetoeye.wales

Childline

0800 1111

www.childline.org (online chat available)

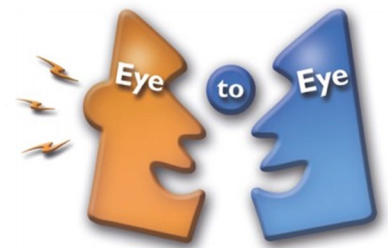
The Mix

0808 808 4994

www.themix.org.uk (online chat available)

Kooth

www.kooth.com (online chat available)



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